

# *The Chicago Jewish*



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**Fall • 1959**

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**Yiddish in Their Lives . . . . . Lillian Mermin Feinsilver**

**Notes on Saul Bellow . . . . . Theodore J. Ross**

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**The Chinese Immigration Puzzle . . . . Burton H. Wolfe**

**Americana—The Story of Gowanda . . . . Clara Wishner**

*In forthcoming issues of*

# THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM



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Murray Frank

The 86th U.S. Congress—its record in terms of civil rights and minority problems.

## Arthur Koestler and the Jews

Lothar Kahn

A study of Koestler's attitude toward Jewry culled from his writings.

## The Winter Soldiers

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A moving story of a conflict involving a Negro boy and an old Jew.

## The Epic of Yiddish Periodicals

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## Martyred German-Jewish Writers

Alfred Werner

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# THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM

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# Centenary of a Great Humorist

By A. A. ROBACK

PRIOR TO THE APPEARANCE of Solomon Rabinowitz's stories in Yiddish, the phrase Sholom (the Hebrew form is *Shalom*) Aleichem denoted the ordinary "How do you do?" among Jews, as it does, in one or another variant, for most of the Semitic peoples. It means simply "Peace be with you," and is accompanied by a handshake.

For the past fifty years, however, the phrase has been associated among literate Jews with one of the most remarkable figures in modern literature; for it is the nom de plume of the greatest humorist the Jews produced—and humor has been a field extensively cultivated by the foremost scapegoat in history. Sholom Aleichem's real name (Solomon Rabinowitz) like Mark Twain's surname, is known only to the cognoscenti. The pen-name is familiar to millions throughout the world, both Jews and non-Jews.

At the time Sholom Aleichem (the name, like the phrase, constitutes a unit and must not be separated) was born a hundred years ago, in March, Yiddish literature did not exist as a body but constituted a random collection of miscellaneous books—largely brochures, consisting of stories, folklore, religious disquisitions, etc. A few years later, Mendele (S. Abramovitch) became the first conscious artist, in that he wrote not only for entertainment but in order to set standards, moral as well as literary. Unlike his predecessors, he did not just dash off his thought helter-skelter, but selected his words with considerable nicety, until he felt satisfied that his diction was adequate.

Sholom Aleichem was born in Pereyaslav (the Ukraine), the name of which was changed to commemorate Bogdan Chmielnicki, who supposedly liberated Ukraine, separating it from Poland; and in the proc-

ess, his hordes massacred tens of thousands of Jews. More recently, the older name was restored. A precocious boy, and unusually imaginative, Solomon began to set down his fancies on paper while in his teens. One of these was the "Jewish Robinson Crusoe." At the age of twenty-one, there appeared his first letter, in Hebrew, dealing with the controversial question of Jewish education in his town. Further correspondence in the Hebrew daily, *Hamelitz*, was followed by articles of little consequence.

## Early Romance

Sholom Aleichem was eighteen when he was engaged by the wealthy farmer and provincial banker, Lyoev, as a tutor for his fourteen-year-old Olga. It was on this country estate that the teen-ager found himself, and also his helpmeet; for it did not take long before tutor and pupil became enamored of each other; and it was here that the youth's imaginative strain found both an outlet and the leisure to gush forth a torrent of novels, poems, plays, and short stories which were pronounced masterpieces by his adolescent pupil. For three years this ideal idyll lasted, but when the romance was discovered, he was given the congé via a curt note informing him that the carriage would fetch him to the depot. Cupid, however, as may have been expected in such a case, subsequently triumphed, and young Solomon, at the age of twenty-four married his sweetheart and both were forgiven by the stern parent who afterwards brought himself to place in his son-in-law's hands matters of trust, and even to name him as executor of the estate.

Meanwhile, i.e., after losing his tutorship, Solomon had qualified as a crown rabbi (not unlike our chaplain), but his father-in-law prevailed upon him to abandon the rabbi-

nate and devote all his time to business. It was as a broker on the stock exchange that he was able to meet some of the types that he so vividly depicted in his Menakhem-Mendl stories, told in the form of letters. At the same time, he had begun to write his inimitable tales and humoresques which were to become the most widely-read offerings in Yiddish. To write in Yiddish at that time was to demean oneself; for to the *Mas-kil* (the so-called "enlightened") it was only a jargon; and, indeed, until the Czernowitz Conference on Yiddish, in 1908, the classic trio, Mendele, Sholom Aleichem, and Peretz would, without meaning to deprecate the language, refer to it invariably as "jargon."

It was Sholom Aleichem who had set himself the task of making out of the "jargon literature" something to boast about. His pen name, the cheery Sholom Aleichem, was at first intended merely to dissociate his official personality from the supposed levity of his stories, which could not well be served in the dignified Hebrew. He still placed Hebrew on a high pedestal, and would occasionally publish in the "sacred tongue," and even made a few attempts in Russian; but it was in Yiddish that he attained his fame, if not his fortune. Indeed, it was while he was busily engaged in bringing out, in the '80's, his series of high-grade literary yearbooks, *Di Folksbibliotek*, with contributions by the foremost Yiddish (and Hebrew) writers of the day, whom he was paying the unheard-of honorarium of twenty kopecks per line (equivalent to about \$2.00 today) that he went bankrupt and lost not only what his dowry had brought him, but even his inheritance and the loan he had received from his mother-in-law.

He had already been a tutor, a rabbi, and a broker, playing the stock-market. In another sphere, he had functioned as an editor and a publisher; and it appears, too, that he had also served as an inspector or instructor of insurance agents, but it was as an author that he was able to exploit his manifold experiences and to depict his world, during his short life, in twenty-eight volumes, covering nearly the whole gamut of literature:

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essays, criticism, verse, plays, novels, short stories, etc.

#### Puts "Jargon" Literature on Map

When Sholom Aleichem wrote to Y. L. Peretz, his compeer in Yiddish letters, that he was bent on putting the "jargon" literature on the map, he could not, in his fondest dreams, have foreseen that scores of Jewish institutions, such as schools, clubs, and libraries, on the five continents, would be named for him; that Sholom Aleichem would be the name of streets in USSR and Israel; that in USSR alone some five million copies of his books would be published in twenty different languages; that even now after the most important Yiddish writers have been liquidated by Stalin-Beria, and Yiddish is banned to the extent that a satellite Yiddish newspaper found in a house is sufficient to gain the occupant a three-year sentence; that Sholom Aleichem's collected works translated into Russian have been published in over half a million copies; that the USSR Government has just sponsored a celebration on a grand scale; that a comprehensive Sholom Aleichem exhibition has been arranged and a commemorative stamp has been issued; and, finally, that there has been published a Sholom Aleichem edition in Yiddish, after a decade of taboo, in 30,000 copies, with hundreds of people standing in line to purchase a copy. All of this constitutes one of the marvels of the USSR.

#### Soviet Rainbow Over Yiddish?

The Centennial of the great Yiddish humorist Sholom Aleichem was celebrated on a grand scale in the Hall of Pillars in Moscow under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and the Soviet Writers Union, despite the fact that Yiddish literature has been banned under the pretext that the Soviet Jews do not need it. Furthermore, for the first time since the execution of the foremost Yiddish writers and the liquidation of all Yiddish, a collection of Sholom Aleichem's writings has appeared in Yiddish on the occasion of the Centennial, and translations have been brought out in half

a million copies, which, according to Pravda, make the total of Sholom Aleichem copies published in USSR during the past few years in various translations reach the stupendous aggregate of five million. Articles on the classical Yiddish writers appeared in the chief Russian newspapers on the day of Sholom Aleichem's centenary, and it would seem that there is some hope that Yiddish books will be printed in USSR even if only for foreign consumption.

#### The Essence of Sholom Aleichem's Wit

The celebration of the centenary in the United States, Canada, and other countries during 1959 will probably not be as elaborate as the Peretz festivities, but it will outstrip them in range of participation.

The question will crop up whether Sholom Aleichem, as a humorist, rates in universal literature. Since nearly half of his works are now available in English, readers might judge for themselves, but it must be taken into account that the medium is so different from English and so fraught with religious and Jewish small-town allusions that a good deal of the flavor is lost in the best translation. Nevertheless, the impression will remain that the situations, with their interplays and complications, are perhaps unique; and much of the comicality attaching to them derives from the peculiar psychology and logic of the characters who, themselves, are marginal types, and therefore, since displacement, as Freud has taught, is an essential factor in wit, then because of their displaced status, they are somewhat off-key. It takes, however, a consummate artist to spot these incongruities and to bring them out in sequence, employing the very idiom which is appropriate to the type.

Sholom Aleichem is a realist. Unlike Peretz, he does not delve into the past in order to romanticize or idealize the people or the period. Nor does he, with his older contemporary, Mendele, reveal the crudities of small-town life in order to chasten the petty powers in the community. Sholom Aleichem is no moralist. He is an objective observer

who perceives the comedy of life; and Jewish life is often a comedy surmounted by tragedy. This lends to his stories a particular throb of pathos; and it is this blend which marks most of his writings in a manner not to be found in Mark Twain, to take one instance.

#### Inimitable Characterization

Small wonder that some of Sholom Aleichem's characters have become Jewish household words. Boiberik is the most popular country resort, a kind of Shangri-la. Tevye,



SHOLOM ALEICHEM (SOLOMON RABINOWITZ)

the dairyman, is the lovable Mr. Malaprop, whose daughters have made themselves pawns of fate, but who smiles through his anguish, citing scriptural verses and Talmudic dicta but misapplying them to the amusement of his listeners. Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop cannot hold a candle to Tevye; and it is my considered opinion that the difference between their creators is equally great, even if the one represents one of the

greatest literatures and the other has written in what he himself dubbed "jargon."

Menakhem Mendl, the *luftmentsh* (living out of the air, i.e., without a solid occupation), despite his irresponsibly sanguine antics, is no rogue or imbecile, but merely a well-intentioned ne'er-do-well, because, as William James would have put it, his ambition by far exceeds his capability. Most likely Sholom Aleichem in portraying the broker Menakhem Mendl, who reminds us of an energized Micawber, was going through a process of catharsis by affording us a glimpse of his own doings during his thirties.

Some of the most touching scenes are unfolded in the children's stories, of which there are many, but at best in *Mottel, the Cantor's Son*. The poignant utterance of little Mottel "s'iz mir gut, ikh bin a yossem" (I have never had it so good, for now I'm an orphan), has been so repeatedly quoted, making the rounds throughout the Yiddish-speaking world, that it has become a folk saying, revealing a universal foible, as well as the Jewish trait of compassion (*Rakhmonim b'ney rakhmonim*, as the Jews have styled themselves). It is evident that the humorist's heart was with children; and his mirth, no doubt, reveals a childlike element which stayed with him through his long illness and financial cares to the end.

Sympathy appears to be the keynote of Sholom Aleichem's writings. There are no signs of annoyance or squeamishness to be found there, as one might expect in a man who has observed so much folly in his time. In this respect Sholom Aleichem differs from Mendele, whose humor was akin to satire and stemmed from a subjective reaction against the environment and a desire to reform it. Sholom Aleichem, on the other hand, extended his familial devotion, which characterized him so predominantly, to the world as a whole. The community was one large family, with the children occupying a special niche in his affection.

Some of the Hebrew and Yiddish writers would look down their nose at Sholom Aleichem, because to them he was a simple entertainer. They felt there was nothing edi-

fying or elevating about a woman who came to the rabbi with a ritual problem and talked him into a deep swoon, while we roar at her arithmetical "boners" and her logic in telling her plaintiff neighbor that in the first place she never borrowed a pot, but, secondly, the pot originally had a hole in it, and, thirdly, she returned a perfectly good pot. This three-barreled refutation, incidentally, as an illustration, has been seeping into a number of polemic writings even in technical English books (psychoanalysis). He has often been criticized for his preoccupation with bagatelles. The most hilarious story I have read (and I have translated it) is called "From the Draft Board." It concerns a young man who, for various reasons, had been given three different names; and although he is exempted, he must present himself again and again. The individual characterization of the series of lawyers who are consulted is superb and irresistible.

"There you are!" I blurt out. "Haven't I told you umteen times, haven't I, that Itsik and Abraham Isaac and Alter are all one and the same person, that is, his real name is Itsik, or better, Abraham Isaac, but he's called—his mother petnamed him so—'Alter'; and Izik," I tell him, "is the one who overturned the samovar while I was a Vorotilivker, that is when I was living in Vorotilivkeh."

"In that case," he asks, "when was it that Abraham Alter, I mean, Isaac Itsik, presented himself before the draft board?"

"What is he jabbering! What a mix-up," I say. "You've got the wires twisted. I've never yet in all my life," I say, "come across a Jew to have such a goyish head on him. Haven't I told you that Isaac and Abraham Isaac and Itsik and Izik, and Alter are all one and the same person—one and the same, the very same!"

"See here," he says, "what are you shouting about? Stop your shouting. You might think it was my fault."

"In brief, I slammed the door and went to another lawyer. This time I struck a real Talmud brain, did I, but a little too much of a smarty. He rubbed his forehead and

studied aloud, turned and twisted and worried the laws, inferred that, fundamentally speaking, according to the law, the Mezertch board had no right to register him, but seeing that this board did register him, the other board was obliged to strike him out, that is 'aliminit' him, and then there is a law, he said, that if the board included him and the other board did not take his name out, then they must write him out, that is 'aggamt' him, and then there is a 'statue' that if the other board refuses to take his name out, that is 'aliminit' him . . . well, this law and that law and the other law, this 'statue' and that 'statue.' He just made my head dizzy with laws and 'statues,' just dizzy; and I had to go to a third one now.

"This time I struck a brand new shlemihl, a very young lawyer, just out of the shell, that is just graduated law, and a very cordial fellow with a voice like a bell, a ringing bell.

"It looked to me like he was still practicing to plead, was he, because one could see that he liked to hear himself talk; he just swelled with pleasure. And so he waxed eloquent, delivered a whole speech in my favor, so that I had to interrupt him, saying, 'Excellent,' I said, 'you're absolutely right, but what's the good of your "lementing" me. You better advise me what to do,' I said, 'in case, God forbid, he's called again.'

"Well, to make it short, why bother you with all sorts of stories? I finally got to the right sort, the real A-1 lawyer, one who, mind you, is a lawyer of the old school, a lawyer who understands a thing or two.

"I related the whole story from A to Z, while he sat the whole period with his eyes shut, and listened.

"After I finished, he says to me, 'Are you all through? No more? Why, you just return home. It doesn't amount to a pinch of snuff. You'll not have to pay more than three hundred roubles fine.'

"What, is that all?" I say, "if I only knew that the matter ends in three hundred roubles. What I fear is about my son, I fear."

"What son?" he asks.

"What do you mean, 'what son'? My son Alter; Itsik, that is."

"How does that affect Itsik?"

"What do you mean, 'how does it affect'? Suppose they, God forbid, drag him out again, suppose."

"But you say he has a white card."

"Why, he has two white cards."

"Well then, what more do you want?"

"So far as I am concerned, I want nothing. What I am afraid of is that now that they're looking for Izik, and as Izik doesn't exist, and as Alter, Itsik, that is, is registered as Abraham Isaac, and Isaac—so says our dope of a crown rabbi, is Isak, and Isak is Izik—well they might, God forbid, take my Itsik, or Abraham Isaac, that is Alter, for the dead Izik?"

"Well, then," he says, "all the better. If Itsik is Izik, you'll save the fine too. Didn't you say he had a white card?"

"Two white cards," I reply, "but the two white cards were given to Itsik, not to Izik."

"Didn't you just tell me that Itsik was Izik?"

"Whoever told you Itsik is Izik?"

"Why, just a moment ago, you said that Itsik was the same as Izik!"

"I? How could I tell you such a thing when Itsik is no other than Alter, and Izik is the boy who overturned the samovar while I was a Vorotilivker, that is, lived in Vorotilivke . . . I . . .

"Getting into a purple rage, he cries out, 'Stupaite vi nadoieliveh yevrei!'"

"Just think of it; I, a pest. I should be called a pest. I! . . . \*

These comedies of errors may sound like a chain of trivialities, but they are not bagatelles. They are the warp and woof of our trials and tribulations.

If Sholom Aleichem moves in the sphere of the commonplace, he certainly does not depict it in any commonplace or banal manner, but illuminates it with all its quirks and nuances. It becomes accordingly a socio-psychological pattern which discloses far more than is superficially in evidence to those who just guffaw at the ineptitudes of his feckless heroes.

The psychological subtleties are not after-

thoughts on the part of the writer in order to titillate our risibilities but emanate from the situation as a whole, like overtones, which constitute the timbre of the musical rendering. For one thing, the virtues often shine through the fallacies, the immature reactions; and while we laugh at the impossibilities, we also can see the human touch behind the stupidity.

Elsewhere (*Story of Yiddish Literature*) I call Sholom Aleichem a great average man. Had his sense of humor not been so prodigious he might fall into the category of Babbits. He constantly pleads the cause of the "little man," whom he understands so well. The distinguished, the striking, the extraordinary, the exotic—all these are beyond his ken. He regarded himself as one of the common folks, and his self-indited epitaph stresses this trait perhaps to the point of exaggeration.

Only Sholom Aleichem could have given us descriptions of life in a Jewish town like Berditchev (which happens to be the birthplace of Joseph Conrad, and of Balzac's wife, Walska) so that we can see before us unforgettable scenes of a fire, of a theater performance, a robbery, tramway traffic, hotel activities, through which the comic is intertwined with pathos. The great Balzac saw nothing but squalor in Berditchev.

#### Sholom Aleichem in America

Sholom Aleichem's first visit to the United States in 1906 gave much promise. Among the telegrams which greeted him on his arrival was one signed "Mark Twain—The American Sholom Aleichem." His acclaim was sufficient to elate him and write his friends Bialik and Ravnitzki: "The honor I was given upon landing from the first day I came here until the so-called reception was really a bit too much. But the recognition that has been accorded our Yiddish literature and our beloved vernacular has truly afforded me much pleasure. . . . I hope that this will be the end of my wanderings. There are prospects of a very brilliant future for me here."

The humorist, however, was soon disillu-

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sioned. As in everything else, the glamor wore off. The American mode of life, the hustle and bustle (a favorite expression of his was that "in America, you must constantly save yourself [from getting run over]") did not appeal to him, and some of the American stories are satires almost in the vein of Stephen Leacock. For one thing, the commercialism of the Yiddish press, with its coteries and personal animosities and rivalries, was frustrating. His health had been declining, too, and in 1907, he returned to Switzerland.

It was not till December, 1914, that he took refuge in the United States after harrowing experiences due to his physical suffering (tuberculosis, bladder trouble, and a species of diabetes) and the international political situation.

The *Tog* engaged him at a salary of \$5,000, but his autobiography *Funem Yarid* (*Book from the Fair*) was not to the taste of the publishers, who expected the sidesplitting stories which had made him famous in Jewry.

In 1916, he was obliged to join another daily, the *Warheit*, which was soon to merge with the *Tog*. He also contributed to a number of other Yiddish journals and toured as a reader of his own stories, in which he excelled. The *New York World* printed his stories in translation and also syndicated them. Nevertheless, his failing health interfered with his plans and ambitions. In 1916, at the age of 57, on May 13, his creative life was brought to an end. Possibly a quarter of a million people attended the funeral, which was one of the most imposing New York had seen. In his will, he expressed the wish that he be buried with the plain workers and not with the aristocracy.

In the same vein did he indite his own epitaph, which reads:

Here lies an ordinary Jew  
Who wrote in Yiddish, it is true;  
And for wives, and plain folk rather,  
He was a humorist, an author, and  
Poking fun at all and sundry,  
At the world he thumbed his nose.

## CENTENARY OF A GREAT HUMORIST

The world went on swimmingly  
While he, alas, took all the blows  
And at the time his public rose  
Laughing, clapping, and making merry  
He would suffer, only God knows,  
Secretly—so none was wary.

(Translated by A. A. Roback)

### The Best in Sholom Aleichem

If I were asked which were the best stories of Sholom Aleichem, it would be difficult to make a selection. Tevye the Dairyman appeals to many because of the misfortunes that the hero accepts with equanimity; and, too, his malapropisms, naturally enough, afford them an opportunity for feeling superior.

My own estimate is that the monologues, such as "Back from the Draft Board," (Fun Priziv) "The Counsel," (Eytze), "The Pot," (Teppl) then the hilarious descriptions of life in Kasrilevke (or Berditchev, as it was first called in the series, Gantz Berditchev), as well as the tale about cures at the baths, where the broker arranges for a physician and the physician for the professor, and old auntie, who, in her naiveté, bursts the bubble is really the heroine—these are the most humorous, revealing the genuinely human behind the shortcomings of homo sapiens. His "Big Winnings" (Dos groisse Gevins) has been successfully dramatized and belongs to his psychological masterpieces. "Gymnazye" is a fine satire on Mrs. Newly Rich, and *It's hard to be a Jew*, a play in three acts, has often been performed in English.

### Bibliography

Sholom Aleichem's works have appeared in many editions. The first complete edition was brought out in 1917 in 28 volumes, both in Poland and the United States. Since then the set has been re-issued again and again. Editions have recently come out in Poland, Rumania, Argentina, and the United States, where each of the Yiddish dailies (*Forverts*, *Tog*, and *Freiheit*) published its own edition.

Sholom Aleichem's son-in-law, I. D. Berkowitz, a noted littératur, translated all of his father-in-law's works into Hebrew as no other could have done.

In Russia, several million copies of his works were run through the press in some twenty languages, principally Russian. A new complete translation is being undertaken now to commemorate the centenary. Polish, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Lettish, Spanish, Hungarian, German, Czech, and even Japanese and Esperanto have been utilized to spread the fame of the great humorist. Edmond Fleg tackled, not altogether successfully, *Tevye der Milkhiker*, employing the Alsace idiom.

We have now nine volumes of Sholom Aleichem in English and a number of his works in collected volumes, like anthologies.

Among the earliest were *Stempenu* (Weinstein) and *Jewish Children* (Hannah Berman). Later came *The Old Country* (F. and J. Butwin), *Tevye's Daughters* (F. and J. Butwin), *Inside Kasrilevke* (I. Goldstick), *Wandering Star* (F. Butwin), *Adventures of Mottel*, the Cantor's son (Tamara Kahana), and *The Great Fair* (T. Kahana, who incidentally is Sholom Aleichem's granddaughter). The critic, A. Kazin, has edited a Sholom Aleichem volume for the Modern Library. Other volumes of translation are in the making. Difficult as Sholom Aleichem is to translate because of the peculiar idiom, several of the versions are quite adequate.

A rich mine of material on Sholom Aleichem, as well as translations will be found in M. Grafstein's magnificent and profusely illustrated *Sholom Aleichem Panorama*. Maurice Samuel's *The World of Sholom Aleichem* has been used in connection with a play produced in English by a non-Jewish troupe. His *It's Hard to be a Jew* has been produced in English by Maurice Schwartz, and his *Gymnazye*, in dramatized form, is also a favorite in English.

If all Sholom Aleichem editions, including translations and books about him, were collected in one repository, the number would aggregate in the hundreds.

# War-Criminal Trials\*

By MICHAEL A. MUSMANNO

If there is one person who should be grateful to the Allies for the absolute impartiality and competence with which the Nuremberg International War Crimes Trials were conducted, it should be August von Knieriem. He was indicted and charged with having participated in the planning, preparation, and waging wars of aggression, in various criminal acts of spoliation, and in the criminal use of slave labor.

He had a fair trial, he was given every opportunity to gather and submit evidence which he believed would support his plea of innocence, he selected his own attorney who was authorized to summon witnesses at the expense of the Allies, and he testified in his own behalf. He had the privilege of cross-examining the witnesses who appeared against him. He was allowed to speak in his own defense as much as he pleased. And, in the end, he was acquitted of all charges.

Now, he writes a book of over 500 pages to prove that the Nuremberg trials were wrong. One who has the slightest acquaintance with the story of World War II must read Knieriem's book with a great deal of patience since many of his assertions ignore history, distort facts, and place the most extraordinary interpretations upon the simplest uncontradicted events. To begin with, he says that Germany did not violate any law when she plunged the whole world into the most dreadful war of all time. He even becomes sarcastic about it. He says:

The international treaties, agreements, and promises which Germany is supposed to have violated are the so-called Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 and a number of pacts of non-aggression which Germany had concluded with her neighbors.

Supposed to have violated? The fact of the matter is that Germany was the first

signatory to the Kellogg-Briand Treaty which spelled out as clearly as language can convey meaning that the signing nations agreed never to resort to war to settle international controversies. It outlawed war. In addition, Germany, by separate treaties, agreed never to attack Poland, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Russia, and Yugoslavia. She attacked them all, overran them with tanks and bayonets, and in nearly every one of them committed war crimes and atrocities, all outlawed by the Geneva and Hague Conventions, which Germany had also solemnly agreed to observe.

But Knieriem says the fact that a forbidden war is illegal "does not mean that waging it can be punished." But of what use is it to forbid any evil act if the evil-doer cannot be punished? If the criminal is not restrained, what is to happen to society?

Knieriem does not stop here. He says that merely because an illegal war violates international law does not mean that "those who plan and wage such a war commit crimes by these actions." When one reads such nonsense on page 55 of a 500-page book, one wonders whether he should go on. I went on, despite the murkiness of the writing, the wearisome repetitions, and the general abstruse treatment of the whole subject. I hoped, as I turned the pages, that the author would suddenly tell us something of what was really involved at Nuremberg, that he would voice the heartache of mankind over the horrors and imbecility of wars which turn human beings into savages, and entomb, at least temporarily, all the attributes of man which distinguish him from a jungle beast. However, of all this, nothing from Knieriem.

The persevering reader ploughs on, and then when he gets to page 511 he wishes

\* The Nuremberg Trials, by August von Knieriem. Henry Regnery Company. 561 pp. \$12.50. Translated from the German by Elizabeth D. Schmitt.

that the contents of that page had appeared on page 1. He thus might have been spared the tedium of searching through 500 intervening pages for the author's message. Naturally the reader assumes that the author does have a message for despairing mankind that wants to know what is to be done to save the world from future wars which could mean universal and all-eliminating destruction.

And what is Knieriem's message? He has none. Knieriem is of the opinion that nothing can be done or should be done. The State is supreme and no matter what crimes it commits, it does not have to answer to anyone for its offenses.

According to Knieriem, it was improper to try any German for war crimes committed during World War II because, first, it had to be established that international law forbade the State from doing the questioned act and, then, "if it would be found that international law had been violated by the State, the entirely different question would have to be decided as to whether or not the individual defendant would be punishable under his own domestic law." This would mean that if Russia should launch an aggressive war against the United States and destroy three-fourths of our country, Khrushchev and the others who launched and waged the war could not be tried unless Russian law specifically spelled out that Russians were prohibited from fighting in a war which the Russian government had itself proclaimed, directed, and waged!

According to Knieriem's reasoning, not even Hitler could have been tried, had he survived the war which killed off 20,000,000 human beings and so disorganized the world that one wonders whether man can ever again live without fear. The only hope for the human race lies in the realization that controversies between nations must be decided in international courts and not on the battlefields of the globe. The only salvation for mankind is an international criminal code which will punish those who will dare to do what Hitler and his associates did. But Knieriem, who lived in Germany and

who saw some of the catastrophic horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime, still argues that there was no law to try Goering, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Frank, and the others who wrought more havoc, woe, and disaster to mankind than any other group of similar size in the entire history of the world.

According to Knieriem, there is nothing to prohibit another Hitler from doing what the original Adolf did and if, in the event he should survive the all-consuming conflagration he would ignite, he would be free, as the Kaiser was allowed to be free following the ruin he visited upon the world in World War I.

Knieriem's principal argument is that there exists no international criminal code and therefore there can be no punishment for doing what is not prohibited by law. But in this statement Knieriem ignores the whole concept of international law, which is not based on statute but upon treaties and upon customs which have been recognized by all nations for such a period of time that they have become part of the system of rules which guides and controls peoples in all parts of the world in their relationship with each other.

The basic charge at Nuremberg was murder. Murder has been recognized as a crime by the human race from the beginning of time. No one convicted at Nuremberg could, with any pretense of sanity, argue that he did not know that to order the death of millions of helpless human beings in organized massacre was not a crime.

Knieriem argues that international law applies only to States and not to individuals, but what are States? Are they not individuals banded together? The State has no independent body which strides over the terrain of which it is composed; the State has no independent brain floating in the air; it has no soul capable of dignity, revenge, contrition, or remorse. The State is made up of its accepted political head, whether he be king, president, or dictator, of its ministers, generals, admirals, bureau heads, and the masses of the population.

Who declares war, who wages wars, who

orders massacres? Is it the State? Does a given piece of the earth's surface, with its mountains, rivers, lakes, plains, and forests issue ultimatums and then go to war? Is it a mountain which fires a cannon, is it a swamp which pilots an airplane carrying bombs of destruction?

The State does not exist beyond the human beings who comprise it. To speak of France or Germany or the United States without visualizing its inhabitants is like speaking of vast areas in the middle of the ocean. When France, under the dictatorship of Napoleon, waged aggressive war against most of Europe and was then defeated in battle, it was not France which was exiled. It was Napoleon. It was not France which paid the reparation bills and the war debts. It was her people.

But, even if we were to accept Knieriem's thesis that the State is everything and that it is the State which declares and wages war, what then? Let us suppose a situation where a State invades her neighbor for proclaimed plunder and illegal gain, but is eventually defeated on the field of battle. In the meantime the aggressive State has killed hundreds of thousands of the invaded State's population. It has laid her cities in ruins, it has despoiled her fields, factories, and her treasures. The crime is complete. International law says so. Who is to be punished for the crime?

According to Knieriem, the "sanctions of international law can only be taken against the State, and these sanctions are not of the nature of criminal but of quasi-private law. They may consist in either retortion or the duty to make reparation." That is to say, the victim State may now ravish the criminal State; it may retaliate with murder, fire, rape, and destruction. Or it may compel the criminal State to pay money. Will money restore the lives of those who have been slain, will it repaint the destroyed masterpieces of art, will it rewrite rare manuscripts which have been reduced to ashes?

Of course, punishing the instigators of the aggressive war will not restore lives or paintings either, but it will remove them from

the scene, as was done with Goering, Ribbentrop, Keitel, et al, so as to prevent them from repeating their crimes. Moreover, and this, of course, is the principal purpose of all penology, the punishments will deter others who might be tempted to the commission of similar crimes.

Knieriem believes that the Nuremberg trials, if they were to take place at all, should have been manned by judges selected from countries that had not been touched by the war. Was there any country that did not feel the heat of the scorching flames of World War II? Knieriem says that the victors sat in judgment over the vanquished. This is a superficial argument. In every organized society the judges are taken from the law-abiding element of the population which is constantly engaged in war against the law-breaking element of society, but this does not mean that, although the judges are paid from the same treasury which pays the police and the prosecuting attorneys, they will be blind to the rights of the accused. Knieriem's own case shows the fallacy and the insincerity of the argument. He was tried by the so-called victors, and he was acquitted. Many of the accused were acquitted in Nuremberg. And of the convicted, the penalties were not of one unyielding pattern. To the extent that it was possible to do so, the punishment was made to fit the crime.

Knieriem even argues that German judges should have sat on the bench at Nuremberg, or perhaps alone have tried the accused. But Germany was authorized to try the war criminals of World War I, and she simply did not do the job. Had the Allies of World War I punished, after trial and conviction, the criminals of that war, there would never have been a World War II, because the would-be instigators of the second war would not have dared to risk their necks. Moreover, a Germany informed of its rights would never have allowed Hitler to gain the absolute power which would have permitted him to plunge the nation into war because of his own ambitions.

Albert Speer, Minister of Armament under Hitler, was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. He said to me that had men in his position been tried following World War I, he would never have done what he did in World War II. When I asked him if he resented his 20-year sentence, he replied:

What is twenty years in the life of the human race? I am married and have several small children. I naturally love them, but even the loss of their companionship does not embitter me. If my imprisonment may help to educate future cabinet members of bellicose rulers in the correct moral discharge of their duties, it will be a small price to pay for the benefit of mankind. As one of Hitler's assistants, I must pay for whatever part I played in bringing the world to its present unhappy state.

I see a vast difference between Albert Speer and August von Knieriem.

I do not recommend the reading of Knieriem's book. It is misleading and it is misinformative in that it hardly mentions the horrendous deeds, for the commission of which, the defendants were tried. And how can anyone pass judgment on any issue without reviewing the facts? The book is probably extremely well written in German, but the translation gives the reader the feeling that he is looking through the muddy waters of a pond to discover what lies at the bottom. Unfortunately, this makes for very dull reading.

## TO A SMALL CHILD

By RUBY ZAGOREN

You are Gulliver; we, the giants  
 Who look upon you as a wonder:  
 The man in miniature; a marvel  
 How, upright, you can walk under  
 The tables scaled for Brobdinag:  
 Our chairs are scaled to giant size.  
 You, Gulliver, behold. You cock your head  
 And climb them only with your eyes.



A. Raymond Katz

THE THREE PRINCIPLES  
 Torah, worship, charitable deeds

# *Yiddish in Their Lives*

By LILLIAN MERMIN FEINSILVER

**W**HAT PLACE does Yiddish have in the lives of American Jews? The public for literary Yiddish has unquestionably diminished, and even among first-generation American Jews the language often serves chiefly as a storehouse of apt expressions with which to spice up varying brands of American English.

Yet the expressiveness of Yiddish has had an impact beyond that first generation. Children of immigrants have absorbed the tongue's earthy saltiness and have passed on much of it to the American milieu, if not always directly to their own offspring. Many a third- or fourth-generation American Jew has picked up Yiddish terms as Americana.<sup>1</sup>

It may therefore be instructive to inquire into this colorful body of patter from which American slang has borrowed some of its gusto: In what ways is Yiddish ordinarily used in the first and second generations? What attitudes and responses do those uses express? And what do these have to tell us about American Jews?

The following topical headings may help to systematize the wealth of idiom to be dealt with: Life and Health, Destiny, Exclamations, Resignation, Annoyance, Imprecation, Characterization, Humor, Passing Judgment, Tribalism, Vulgarity, and Bilin-gualism.

## *Life and Health*

Jewish existence has historically been precarious. Popular Yiddish abounds in expressions that mirror the Jew's concern for life and health—from the famous toast, *l'chayim* (Hebrew, "to life"), to the planning-qualifier, *az Got vet helfen un mir velen leben*—“if God helps and we live.” A satisfied clucking over a child may be expressed with a *leben oyf dayn kepele!*—“a life on your head,” or *oyf lange yoren!*—“long years to

you!” or the biblically inspired *biz hundert un tsvantsig!*—“until 120!”

Even notice of the passing of time involves thanks to God for one's having survived: *'s iz shoyn Got-tsu-danken elef a zeyger*—“It's already God-be-thanked eleven o'clock.” (This has a certain lightness of touch, and the second generation often adds the time in English: *'s iz shoyn Got-tsu-danken eleven o'clock*.)

With respect to health, there are the familiar partings, *Zay gezunt*—“Be well” and *Gey gezunt un kum gezunt*—“Go well and come back well”; the toast, *tzu gezunt!*—“to health”; and the popular expression of good wishes to someone who has acquired new clothing, *Trug es gezunterheyd*—“Wear it well,” or “Wear it in good health.”<sup>2</sup> (This has recently cropped up on TV.) New furniture might call forth the comment, “Use it in good health” or the hybrid, “Use *es gezunterheyd*.”

Indeed, reference to the appearance of a child will evoke expression of the dual concerns for life and health: “He looks like his father; may he live and be well.” And talk of the future is similarly twice-qualified: *az mir velen leben un zayn gezunt*—“if we live and are healthy.” (I know a family in which this expression is such a by-word that the daughter [3d generation], away at school, uses it in alphabetical form whenever she writes home of her plans: “a.m.v.l.u.z.g.”)

Unfortunately, plans do not always work out, but there is the reminder of the overriding value of health: *abi gezunt*—“as long as you're healthy.” (This has achieved some currency in general slang.)

## *Destiny*

Though neither life nor health is taken for granted, the Jew allows himself to hope for more: Embarking on a new venture

evokes the hope, *Zol zayn mit glik* (or *mazel*)—“May it be with good fortune.” In discussing the excellent luck of someone else, he may comment, *Oyf unz gezugt gevoren!*—“Would that it had been destined for us!” And in reporting another’s suffering he will be careful to add, *Nisht far unz gedacht*—“Be it not even thought for us.”

A degrading experience inspires the well-known objection, *Zol dos nit trefen tsu a hunt*—“It shouldn’t happen to a dog.” Indeed, in adversity, the Jew has always felt free to challenge his destiny. From Abraham, who felt free to bargain with the Lord against the threatened destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah, to the psalmist remonstrating with Him for not having eased his burden, to Sholom Aleichem’s Tevye, who after successive prayers and successive misfortunes asks God please to forget that there is a Tevye in the world, the Jew has been on a familiar footing with his Creator. Witness the old Yiddish jingle, *Oy, Got, farzich mayn compote, vest du vissen vos a ta'am es hot!*—“O God, sample my compote, and you’ll know what a taste it has!”

On the other hand, if things go well, there is the happy *Mir haben es derlebt!*—“We have lived to see it!” and the generous hope, *Mir't she shem bay dir!*—“If God wills it, may it be true of you!”

But one must not dwell on good luck. Delight over destiny is accompanied by *kayn ayn hora*—“no evil eye.”

Whether or not one seriously believes in an after-life, respect for the dead causes one to add, after the name of a departed one, the Hebrew-derived *Olev ha Sholem*—“Peace be with him.” (In the second generation, this is often spoken in translation, “May he rest in peace.”)

#### Exclamations

As is already evident, exclamations are profuse in popular Yiddish American. Just a few simple ones may be worth noting:

*Takeh*, the equivalent of “really,” has some special linguistic hold. “*Takeh fine*” is a common bilingual expression of approval.

*Gut gezugt!*—“Well said!”—often approves skillful repartee.

The famous exclamatory question, *Nu?* probably reflects the gregarious character of Jewish existence: someone is always waiting for someone else! Growing impatience makes for *Nu-nu?* or finally *Nuzhe?*

Both *oy!* and the intenser *ay!* are multiplied in effect with repetition: *oy-oy!* or *oy-oy-oy!*, *ay-ay-ay!* or even *ay-ay-ay-ay-ay!*, which, with emphasis on the third syllable, is often used sarcastically.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps the most popular term for varying degrees of consternation is the familiar *Oy vey iz mir!*—“O woe is me!” This has taken hold among the second generation and many of the third generation, too, as *Oy vey'z mir!*—emphasized sometimes on the second word, sometimes on the last, or shortened to either *Oy vey!* or *Vey'z mir!* (It has already been heard on TV in several forms.)

#### Resignation

Still, the Jew is accustomed to difficulty; he must compromise with it. And he expresses his philosophical resignation in a variety of popular dicta: *Ayn berero hot men?*—“Does one have a choice?”; *A Yid iz in Golus*—“A Jew is in exile”; *Es iz shver (un bitter) tsu zayn a Yid*—“It’s hard (and bitter) to be a Jew”; *Mi mutshet zech*—“One suffers.” The slice of bread falling to the floor, it is wryly observed, is always *mit dem putter arunter*—“with the buttered side down.” (If not, the postscript goes, “It has fallen on the wrong side.”)<sup>4</sup>

Yet one does not merely accept misfortune; one tries to make it palatable. If something has been broken or lost, one strengthens up and sets upon it a value inherited from ancient times: a *sheyne, reyne kapure*—“a good, clean sacrifice.” After all, there are other more important concerns in life: *Zol dos zayn dayn ergste dayge*—“May that be your biggest worry.” (From this the second and third generations have derived such expressions as, “I hope that’s the worst problem you’ll ever have.”)

Moreover, if one misbehaves, one might just as well go “whole hog”: *Az mi est*

chazer, zol es rinnen fun dem burd!—"If you eat pig, let it overflow your beard!"—a remarkably tolerant attitude for a rule-bound people, yet illustrating the realism with which Jews have viewed life.

#### Annoyance

In inter-personal frictions, Jews make use of a number of handy remarks: Vos burtshes du?—"What are you muttering about?" A parent may ask this with relative good-nature. If the muttering child attempts to plead a case that has already been judged with another child as plaintiff, the parent may exclaim, A naye chassine! (Surkeh hot noch nisht getanst!)—"A new wedding! (Sarah hasn't danced yet!)"

Or, if in discussion of some proposal one person points out as a drawback an element which the other person feels is an advantage, the latter's response would be, A chesoren, di kaleh iz tsu sheyn!—"A fault, the bride is too pretty!" (In the second generation, this is often heard as "The bride is too pretty"—the obvious source, by the way, of a recent movie title, "The Bride Is Much Too Pretty.")

Or imagine a wife elaborating an argument to her husband, who remains unmoved. She may express her exasperation with any of the following: Red tsu dem lomp! (or vant!)—"Talk to the lamp! (or wall!)"; Red fun haynt biz morgen!—"Talk from today till tomorrow!"; Klap kop in vant!—"Bang your head against the wall!" (This is often put, "It's like banging your head against a wall!"); Ayn akshen!—"A stubborn ox!"

He, on the other hand, might counter with, Vos haks du mir a tshaynik?—"What are you banging me a kettle for?"<sup>5</sup> Loz mir up!—"Let me go!" Vos vilst du fun mir hoben?—"What do you want from me?" Oy! explodes the wife, mi ken platsen!—"You can bust!" Ich ken es nisht farnemen!—"I can't take it!"

Annoyed at unjustifiable ignorance, one might hurl the literary insult, Fun vi kumst du, Yehupets?—"Where do you come from, Yehupets?" (Yehupets is Sholom Aleichem's version of Kiev.) And the injured party

#### THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM

might react with the casually defiant *Ich hob dir in bod*—"I have you in the bathtub" (often abbreviated to *Ich hob dir!*), which is the equivalent of "Go jump in the lake"; or the more threatening *Ich'l dir bald geben!*—"I'll soon give it to you!"

#### Imprecation

Anger and indignation in any language lead to imprecation of various kinds. Yiddish imprecations are quite colorful and sometimes horrifying if taken literally, particularly as they have in the past been frequently hurled at children; but most observers have felt that the less-than-literal intent was clear to the child, and one has suggested that such effective verbalization of bad feelings may even prevent anti-social behavior.<sup>6</sup> So far as I know, the name of God is never profaned.

The mild *Ver Farloren*—"Get lost" is intensified in *Ver farvalgert*—"Get wandered off" and *Ver farblondzhet*—"Get unspeakably strayed." *A shvarts yur!*—"A black year!" may be invoked as someone's due, or the term may describe an unpleasant person. *A finster leben oyf im!*—"A dark life upon him!" and *A klug oyf im!*—"A curse upon him!" are variations on the theme.

The Yiddish methods of sending someone to his end are characterized by reckless abandonment: *Tsibrech dayn kop!*—"Break your head!"; *Zol dir chapen a chalyeryel!*—"May a plague catch you!"; *Ver tsuharget!*—"Get killed!"; *In der erd arayn!*—"Into the ground!"; *Zolst vaksen vi a tsibile (mit dem kop in der erd)!*—"May you grow like an onion (with your head in the ground)!"; *A mise mishunah oyf dir!*—"A horrible death to you!"

There would seem to be a dramatic difference in the generations with regard to the use of such expressions, particularly with children. Life in the European *shtetl* was difficult at best, and the offspring were often unfortunate targets of their mothers' grievances against society (the terms being chiefly the province of women). The later strains and adjustments involved in settling in a new country with a strange language could

not help fostering the use of all the old-country expostulations.

Today, the exclamatory Yiddish used with American Jewish children seems largely confined to three threats: *Ich'l dir bald geben!*—"I'll soon give it to you!" (which is often spoken good-naturedly); the more forceful *Ich'l dir bald derlangen!*—"I'll soon hand it to you!"; and the common hybrid, "Do you want a *patsh* (slap)??"—illustrating, perhaps, one way in which parent-child relations have not changed even since Talmudic days, when one rabbi cautioned that parents should never threaten a child but should either punish him promptly or say nothing.

#### Characterization

The same quick articulation that brings forth damnation or praise consummately describes personality types: *meshuggener*—"a wacky guy"; *klutz*<sup>7</sup>—"a dope"; *nudnik*—"a bothersome fellow"; *shlemiel*—"a hapless character"; *shlimazel*—"misfortune," hence a pathetically unlucky fellow;<sup>8</sup> *shlepper*—"a slob"; *koch leffel*—"a gossip" (literally, "a cooking spoon," which stirs up the pot); *shlump*—"a frump"; *shnukel*<sup>9</sup>—"a sap," "a sucker"; *yente*—"an unrefined female"; *kvetch*—"a whiner"; a *grober yung*—"a coarse fellow"; a *farbissiner*—literally, "a bitten one," "a sour-puss"; *petshetshe*—a female "pest," a kind of combined *nudnik* and *kvetch*; *richteker*—"a real one," "a pip." Such terms are popular even beyond the second generation and in some cases in Americanese. This fact probably indicates not only the universality of these personality types, but the expressive depreciation of the sounds.

There are, of course, more attractive characterizations: a *mentsh*—"a person" (admiringly); a *sheyner Yid*—"a fine Jew"; a *balebote*—"a capable housekeeper"; and so on. But the less admirable personalities seem to have inspired a more numerous and more colorful terminology, as is probably true in any language.

#### Humor

Examples of ironic twists upon words, as well as ironic comments upon life, occur

throughout this presentation, and it is clear that they illustrate some of the humorous appeal of Yiddish. Furthermore, Yiddish provides many "private jokes" for American Jews which utilize pet terms that carry special meaning.

One type of such private joke is the bilingual pun, discussed in a later section. (See *Bilingualism*, below.) Another type makes punch-lines out of well-known phrases, giving them incongruous application. An illustration: A poor Jew is shown the impressive burial-place of the wealthy Rothschild and exclaims, "*Dos heyst gelebt!*"—"That's living!" Similar incongruities have been developed for a *sheyner Yid*—"a distinguished Jew," for '*s iz gut far Yiden?*'—"Is it good for the Jews?" and for *abi gezunt*, to mention a few.

In addition, there are playful uses of well-known expressions, such as *Zolst mir entschuldigen*—"You should excuse me";<sup>10</sup> *Mi ken gehaget verren!*—"You can get killed!" and *Nu, darf men geyn in college?*—"So, do you have to go to college?"

#### Passing Judgment

Jews are perceptive observers. In a number of popular Yiddish sayings, they neatly sum up a variety of situations.

What does a lanky fellow look like? A *langer loksh*—"a long noodle." Does someone lack personality? *Er iz eppes un zalts* (or *un ta'am*)—"He's somehow without flavor"; '*s fit im eppes*—"He lacks something." (In people, as in foods, Jews like seasoning!) A person without enthusiasm is characterized in the earthy *a kolten toches*—"a cold bottom."<sup>11</sup>

If a purchase is approved, it is *gutte s'choyre*—"good merchandise"; and in the second generation the translation, "good goods," is humorously used.

If someone is observed to be attempting a thing about which he knows nothing, there is the convenient snort, *A mentsh fun . . .*—"A person from . . ." Is Sam entering politics? A *mentsh fun politics!* Is someone acting like a "big shot"? A *gantser knaker!*—"A whole man of importance!" (A modern

wit defines a gantser knaker as "a fellow who does cross-word puzzles with a fountain-pen!"

Are certain people always getting into everything? The apt comment, which was recently applied to one of the national Jewish organizations, is, *Mi tanst oyf alle chasines*—"They dance at all the weddings."

A drawn-out story is, of course, a *gantse Megillah*—as long as the story of Esther that's read aloud on Purim.

A *farshlepte krenk*—"a dragged-out sickness"—neatly describes a tedious process. And the situation that is pretty "far-gone" evokes, 's iz shoynt nisht fri!—"It's already not early!"

The "sidewalk superintendent" offers another popular comment, 's vet gornisht helfen—"It won't help a bit," or the more emphatic 's vet helfen vi a teyten bankes!—"It'll help like compresses on a corpse!"

A *kranken, fregt men*—"A sick person, you ask"—is the succinct reply of a man who has been asked whether he would like something to eat. A *gezunten, git men*—"A well one, you feed"—is the other half of the quotation, which seldom needs verbalizing.

And *az mi fregt, iz treyf*—"if you ask, it's not kosher"—is the worldly observation that questions of kashruth are sometimes best not investigated: what you don't know won't hurt you. (Coupled with the philosophical pronouncement noted earlier, *Az mi est chazer, zol es rinnen fun dem burd*, this further illustrates Jewish realism.)

But perhaps the keenest comment of them all is the widely applicable *Oder mi darf nisht, oder es helft nisht*—"Either you don't need it, or it won't help."

#### Tribalism

American Jews have often been accused of "clannishness," with the implication that it derives from the religious idea of Chosenness. And support for this superiority theory may perhaps be found in the common contrasting phrases *Yidishe kop*—"Jewish head" and *Goyishe kop*—"Gentile head," as well as in the derogatory connotations of *sheygets*—"a Gentile male."

Yet this so-called clannishness may be the simple compensatory mechanism of the "out-group": unaccepted, it retreats within itself and either rationalizes its superiority through such phrases or merely relaxes in its own company.

The average American Jew feels more comfortable with "his own." Indeed, almost as in the case of a dog trying to "smell out" a stranger, one of the first questions occurring to Jews about some new acquaintance is, "Is he Jewish?"<sup>12</sup> The various terms used by American Jews to identify another Jew, such as the Yiddish *fun unzere*—"from ours," the Hebrew *Yehudi*—"Jew," and the English "one of us" or short-hand "M.O.T."—"Member of the Tribe," are ample indication of a group consciousness which seems largely derived from insecurity.

#### Vulgarity

Like any other language, Yiddish has its degrees of unrefined verbiage, from pastel "off-color" to unprintable obscenity. Over the years, as H. L. Mencken and others have recorded, a number of terms of various hues have found their way into salesmen's jargon, underworld cant, and general slang. Some, to the expressed displeasure of one prominent critic, have even shown up in comics, fiction, and the theatre.<sup>13</sup>

Foreign terms have always been handy substitutes for emotionally colored words, and Yiddish has come in for its share of euphemistic usage. The obscene sex reference is sometimes used in hybrid form by Jewish businessmen as a synonym for "cheat": "He gave him a y---- ing."<sup>14</sup> Less objectionable words like *navke* ("whore") are bandied about by Jewish males, often as "cover-ups" in mixed company. The slang "shmo" was, of course, a euphemistic shortening of the obscene Yiddish.<sup>15</sup>

It was the process of "covering up" that gave rise in an earlier generation to the alphabetical bilingualisms "T.L.", "T.O.T.", "A.K.", etc., in which the English letters stand for Yiddish words.<sup>16</sup> Of these, "A.K." seems to be lasting the longest, and is sometimes used by young people who are un-

aware of the vulgarity involved—just as has been true with the obscene alphabetical English “snafu.”

#### Bilingualism: Contact with American English

From the fate of individual Yiddish terms in Jewish American speech, one can discern part of the varied pattern of Yiddish interaction with American English, discovering afresh the Jewish “ways with words.”

Sometimes a word or phrase has been utilized unchanged, like *pulke*—“chicken leg” or *alle mayles*—“all the virtues.” At other times, the expression has been given new shades of meaning, as in the figurative use of *kosher*.

Then, too, a Yiddish word may experience a change in pronunciation and/or form, as in the children’s diminutive “bubby” for *bobe*—“grandma,” or as in “neb” for *neb-ish*—“a pathetic soul,” which has recently been popularized in the retail trade.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes a new bilingual phrase is developed, like “blondzhe time”—“time for getting lost,” which my husband likes to allow when traveling by car!

There is also hybridization of verbs, as in “I can’t be bothered *troskehing* (or *slepping*) those bundles”; or of names, as in “Ruthkele” or “Davidel.” And the popular Slavic suffix *-nik*, whose humorous potential “hit” American journalism with the Russian sputnik in the Fall of 1957, has for years been common in Yiddish Americanese, decorating a host of inventive terms, from “no-goodnik” to “cruisenik.”

The Yiddish *shm* formula of deprecation must, of course, be noted, as in the famous “Cancer, *shmancer*” or the adjectival “fancy-*shmancy*.<sup>18</sup>

And besides the alphabetical bilingualisms mentioned earlier, there are good-natured plays on words, as in “Grease (the folks)” for *geriss*, “to give regards to”; or in “pig-in-the-pen” for *Pid-yon-ha-ben*, the traditional redeeming of a male first-born, etc.

Contrariwise, there is the smiling use of the Yiddish *antik* in place of “antique.” Though derived from the same source as

“antique,” Yiddish *antik* connotes irony, as in *Er iz an antik*—“He’s a prize package.” Applying that same pronunciation to collector’s items is therefore a humorous twist.

\* \* \*

The foregoing is a rough representation of the Yiddish terminology to which most of the second generation, and some of the third, have been exposed. What does that terminology reflect? A distinct concern for life and health, for a favorable destiny, with a constant awareness of a divine power with whom one feels familiar; a pride in intelligence and in one’s group; freely-expressed emotions; critical judgment; and a feeling for words, involving humor and an adeptness at metaphor and simile. Add to these realism and an at-homeness with Scripture and popular folk literature, and you have almost a word-picture of the immigrant Jew.

To the extent that succeeding generations use such verbiage, either in the original or in translation, they presumably reveal the continuance to some degree of the same concerns and needs, as well as the aptness of the expressions. But there are certain differences.

First, conditions of life and health have changed, and phrases dealing with them may often reflect more linguistic habit than deeply-felt concerns. (Many a member of the second generation spouting “kinihora” has little idea that he is perpetuating Old World superstition, just as is true regarding the American usage, “knock on wood.”) And references to God may not carry quite the same tone of pious familiarity that developed from the Old World Jew’s round of daily prayers and blessings.

Further, there is ordinarily little awareness of the terms’ religious, historical, or literary allusions where these exist (as in a gantse Megillah, “till 120,” “on one foot,” *Yehupets*, etc.). The generations of American-born have not become intimate with Scripture and Jewish history as did their forebears (who started Hebrew education at the age of three), nor with the vast popular Yiddish literature. Because of this, and because spoken Yiddish itself has been heard

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chiefly in smatterings, the second generation's use of the language has had definite limits, even while being expressed in a variety of new ways.

In addition, the use of Yiddish obscenity by American Jewish writers reflects either an inadequate understanding of the emotional colorations involved, or a conscious effort to "put something over." (If the latter, it goes a step beyond what I have termed "esoteric playfulness" on TV, which has been evident in such private clowning as the use of the Yiddish exclamation *feh!* or of character-names like "Mr. Heymish.")

But the most striking new phenomenon is the mood of sentimental nostalgia surrounding the use of Yiddish terms in our present period of "acceptance" and "return" of American Jews. Cocktail napkins carrying the line, "Have a Nash"—meaning "Have a Nibble"; restaurants named *Eppes Essen*—"Something to Eat" (even in Indiana!); greeting cards in a mongrel Yiddish-American like "Today I have a freyluch harts Your birthday's here—a new year starts"; back-cover magazine ads of a Miami Beach hotel man capitalizing on Yiddish terms "like my grandfather used to say" all indicate this trend.

It is more than a mere embellishment of tribalism. Because the Jew feels more accepted, he enjoys whole-heartedly the symbols and the camaraderie of his own fraternity, often passing them on to non-members. Indeed, Yiddish is serving as a dependable pantry-shelf for the hard-pressed Jewish TV writer whose creative inspiration is being eaten up so relentlessly by television's monstrous needs. The impact of TV usage may easily affect the rate at which Yiddishisms continue to invade popular slang.

All this, together with the other countless purveyors of Yiddish in the American scene—such as books and articles, comic-strips and political cartoons, foods and toys on the market, movies, the theatre and radio<sup>19</sup>—indicates that Yiddish, if not renascent, is busily building up its legacy.

1. See in *The Chicago Jewish Forum* my "Yiddish and American English," Winter, 1955-56, and "TV Talks Yiddish," Summer, 1957.

2. The frequency of this usage among American Jews and the concern it reflected were noted by Julius G. Rothenberg in "Some American Idioms from the Yiddish," *American Speech*, Feb., 1943.

3. In Eastern Pennsylvania I have heard both oy-oy and ay-ay used by Gentiles, who presumably get it from Pennsylvania German.

4. This is a good example of what has been called the "second climax" in Jewish humor.

5. Although the fully translated form is rare in Jewish American speech, it cropped up in a recent movie, in which a character explained the purpose of his presence: "I came in to bang a kettle."

6. See, for instance, Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is with People* (1952) and Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (1943).

7. Could this be the source of the old "dumb cluck"?

8. A modern jokester pin-points the difference between a *shlemiel* and a *shlimazl* as follows: "a *shlemiel* is a fellow who will spill a cup of coffee on someone; a *shlimazl* is the fellow upon whom the coffee spills."

9. This seems to be where *shnook* originated.

10. As suggested in my first cited paper, this is the source of the popular "If you'll excuse the expression."

11. This is actually less directly suggestive than the English "cold fish."

12. There is a precious Yiddish story about a Russian Jew who gets on a train and gingerly sits down next to a dignified and handsomely dressed gentleman, not daring to cover more than the edge of the seat. But he looks out of the corner of his eye at the newspaper the stranger is reading and sees that it is a Yiddish one. "Azoy!" he exclaims, "Bist a Yid? Nu, gib shoyn a rik!"—"So! You're a Jew? Well, give a shave, already!"

13. See A. A. Roback, "Shmoo and Shmo: the Psychoanalytic Implications," *Complex*, Spring 1951. This discusses several obscene words.

14. Mencken reported from racketeers' cant the verb "to y----" (*American Language*, Supp. II, 1948, p. 671) and "y----er" (*American Language*, 1946, p. 578).

15. See A. A. Roback, op. cit.; Allan H. Orrick, "On the Etymology of 'Shmoo,'" *American Speech*, 1954; and my "Shmo, Shmog and Shnook," *American Speech*, Oct., 1956.

16. See Donn O'Meara, "American Jewish Alphabetical Expressions," *American Speech*, Oct., 1948.

17. Gift shops around the country are doing well with the "Family of Nebbishes"—pathetic-looking characters gracing, with a line of wry humor, various items "for the man who has nothing."

18. See Leo Spitzer, "Confusion, Schmooshun," *Jl. of Engl. & Germ. Philol.*, April, 1952; A. A. Roback, op. cit., and my second cited paper in these pages.

19. A number of these have been noted in my two cited articles in these pages.

# *Notes on Saul Bellow*

By THEODORE J. ROSS

If SAUL BELLOW has produced no single work of the first order, his over-all achievement nevertheless remains a highly distinguished one. The novels, essays, reviews, and translations of this author all attest to what is perhaps the most remarkable literary talent yet to emerge on the American-Jewish scene. The intelligence behind this talent is humane, witty, and highly imaginative. At the same time, the very hesitations of this intelligence in dealing with those central concerns it has outlined for itself encourage certain hesitations on our part, too. In coming to grips with the question of Jewish values in the modern world, Bellow has asserted two main themes which run through all of his writings: the first is that a man must learn to accept humbly the limitations imposed on his every-day existence by external conditions—not only accept but “love” whatever fate befalls him; the second, which follows from this attitude, is that man must develop a boundless sense of compassion for all forms of life and experience. However, this sense of compassion is seen as the particular preserve of people who have a specialized interest in the arts, or philosophy, or religion, for Bellow seems to assume, rather astonishingly, that a lover of the arts, or of great ideas, or of God will be a lover of mankind. In fact, he takes a dim view of any mode of compassion which has not been, so to say, specially trained or schooled in the right direction. Unschooled man is, for this author, a very scary creature, and one will find no properly compassionating characters in Bellow's fiction who have not first been trained in “superior” ways of feeling by some professional bookworm or other. For example, the plot of one of his most successful works of fiction, *Seize the Day*, hinges entirely on the “training” in com-

passion of a rather bumbling, ill-educated salesman by a mysterious, well-read psychologist who calls himself Dr. Tamkin. Anyone who has read any of Bellow's previous works will immediately recognize the arguments of Dr. Tamkin. They are Bellow's own, and in their electric and poetical way, they articulate those themes of limitation and ever-ready compassion which I have outlined here.

It will be worth underscoring these themes as we review the author's work; for, I would suggest, our author's sometimes wilful stress on these notions appears to be based largely on an undue eagerness (very similar to that of Sholem Asch) to Christianize the uniquely Jewish experience and uniquely Jewish spirit for the sake of transmuting that unique context into something vaguely acceptable to everybody under the sun. In its very intention this is a decidedly un-Jewish endeavor. So, too, are all of Bellow's harpings on “the heritage of love” which he connects somehow with the Jewish social milieu; for the heritage of the Old Testament in its distinctive and unique import is a heritage of the Law—the Law, with its concomitant, a passionate sense of human justice. It is these aspects of the Book, moreover, which have proved to be of enduring and universal relevance. That this heritage has produced one of the most pacific and loving of all peoples only serves to reinforce the substantiality of that Law. In his heedlessness of this authentic aspect of the Jewish heritage Bellow has failed, in part, to tell the truth. His effort to translate Jewishness into the language and style of an inter-faith society of earnest art lovers lends even to his most sober-seeming fictions a certain frivolous tone. Yet we must honor him for the pioneering strides he has made toward those vital areas of experience, emotion, and

query which the Jew often must be the first to confront; this too is a meaning of his heritage.

Saul Bellow made his first strides with the publication of *Dangling Man* in 1944. Like each of his works of fiction, this first novel plunges the reader headlong into the chief currents of contemporary experience, as the author sees them. In this novel of the forties, the author considers the situation of a young intellectual awaiting his call to military service. The wait proves to be a long one, and the novel examines the steady deterioration of the hero's morale as he "dangles" during the months preceding his call. Having given up his job as airlines clerk, he spends most of his time loafing about his neighborhood in Chicago's West Side, supported by his wife. But the hero is unable to make use of his new-found "freedom." The period of loafing, instead of being enjoyable or profitable, proves to be hateful—a period of nothing but "dangling." Ironically, when his draft notice at last arrives the hero welcomes it with a cry of defeat: "Hurrah for regular hours! And for the supervision of the Spirit! Long live Regimentation!"

The record of the hero's defeat, as we might expect in a first novel, is presented in the form of a journal. Joseph, as the journalizing hero is called, offers his "excuse" for keeping such a record with his first entry in his notebook. This entry is worth pausing over since it presents the author's own credo. It is a statement of aims which he consistently adheres to in all of his subsequent works:

There was a time when people were in the habit of addressing themselves frequently and felt no shame at making a record of their inward transactions. But to keep a journal is considered a kind of self-indulgence, a weakness and in poor taste. For this is an era of hardboiled-dom. Today, the code of the athlete, of the tough boy—an American inheritance, I believe, from the English gentleman, that curious mixture of striving, asceticism, and rigor, the origins of which some trace back to Alexander the Great—is stronger than ever. Do you have feelings? . . . Do you have emotions? Strangle them . . . But . . . most serious matters are closed to the hardboiled. They are unpracticed in introspection, and therefore badly equipped to deal with opponents

whom they cannot shoot like big game or outdo in daring.<sup>1</sup>

This credo went wholly counter to the fashionable literary style of the forties, a style which might be summed up in the name Hemingway. For writers of Bellow's generation (he was born in 1915), the master against whom one defined one's own creative aspirations was Hemingway. The objection to the Hemingway tradition was that it closed the door on many types of experience and of human relationships which differed from those of sports, moody adventurers, or tourists with private incomes. Bellow's avowed intention, then, is to open doors on ways of feeling and living which differ from those of the tight-lipped Anglo-Saxon gentleman and his carefully preened code of values. Writing about Hemingway in 1953, Bellow put the matter this way: "Hemingway is forever trying to make his heroes virile and dominant. They are supposed to be cast in the right mold. They are exemplary. . . ." He goes on to suggest that the basis of the Hemingway code depends largely on a fear of being swallowed up in the anonymous mass. The brag of the Hemingway hero, we are told, is that

. . . he has not been disintegrated . . . he has not gotten lost in the capitals of the world . . . nor has he been made anonymous within the oceanic human crowd. He keeps the outline of his personality. That is why his characters are so dramatic; they offer the promise of a strong and victorious identity. But it is strange that Hemingway's standards, unlike Whitman's, should be such exclusive ones. . .<sup>2</sup>

The new aspects of that "oceanic human crowd," the new sources of creative strength are, for this contra-Hemingway writer, those which inhere in the style and society of the urban Jew. Implicit in the texture of *Dangling Man* is this assertion of urban Jewish values which is made explicit in the novels which followed. In *Dangling Man* these values are commingled with the "superior" values of Art and Sensitivity.

Like his biblical namesake, the hero of this novel is both charming and passive. Aware of exceptional sources of power in himself, he refuses to give vent to those sources in any of the usual ways by which

men seek to express themselves. That is, he is uninterested in the usual forms of success. Rather, he seems intent on proving something by his indigent, indolent ways. This something has to do with his idea of the life of the spirit. "I am well supplied with books," he informs us, a few paragraphs after he has let us know that he does not want to be Alexander the Great; for "as long as they surrounded me, they stood as guarantors of an extended life, far more precious and necessary than the one I was forced to lead daily. If it was impossible to sustain this superior life at all times, I could at least keep its signs within reach."<sup>3</sup> Joseph is so sensitive that he is appalled by his niece's preference of Cugat to Haydn. On the other hand, he is proud of his father who, though he never went to college, "can keep up his end of a conversation with a quotation from Shakespeare."<sup>4</sup> Dad, of course, is quick to acknowledge that his son's accomplishments in such spheres are "wider" than his own. This acknowledgement warms Joseph's heart as do pretty sunsets:

We had an enormous sunset, a smashing of gaudy colors, apocalyptic reds and purples such as must have appeared on the punished bodies of great saints, blues heavy and rich. I woke Iva, and we watched it, hand in hand.<sup>5</sup>

I must say I find this moment particularly heart-warming since it is about the only time Joseph pays any attention to a wife whom he otherwise ignores or patronizes. In fact, he suffers from a sense of distress over her seeming inability to profit as much as he would like from the instruction in Bach and other fine matters with which he belabors her. He is himself an ardent appreciator of literature, philosophy, and music (he does not seem to know much about painting) and his journal is shot through with remarks on these subjects. What worries me in all this is whether our anti-Hemingway diarist has not substituted for the old sporting code a code of his own which is equally exclusive: one which merely substitutes for the rites of the melancholy bull-fighter the rites of the tearful appreciator of Bach. There is a danger in this, for the cult of cultivation can become quite as brutish in its way as

the cult of sportingness. One notes, therefore, the rather weird conjunction in Bellow's description of a sunset of aesthetics with ascetics; that is, of ideas of beauty with the ways of professional sufferers, like saints. Such a rather wide-eyed, promiscuous, almost abstract, attitude toward art and sensitivity can lead to a divorce from a sense of social and physical reality—the very realities which are the novelist's stock-in-trade. Novelists, as a matter of fact, are rarely as "sensitive" as, say, businessmen, school-teachers, or waiters.

Joseph's sensitivity leads to a sense of detachment from the events of his time which is most remarkable. When he thinks of becoming a soldier, he muses quietly: "Yes, I shall shoot, I shall take lives; I shall be shot at, and my life may be taken. Certain blood will be given for half-certain reasons, as in all wars."<sup>6</sup> For "half-certain reasons" indeed! To be able to write like this when Hitler's and Europe's butchery of the Jews was at its hideous peak suggests, at best, a certain evasiveness on the writer's part. For all his avowed aim of opening emotional dykes, we sense that he is keeping certain possibilities of emotional response, certain emotional realities, as firmly muted as any Hemingway paragon of self-containment ever did.

In his next novel, Bellow seemed to have taken the wraps off. The setting of *The Victim* is another great city teeming with "oceanic crowds"—New York. The author's rendering of the density of city life is almost hallucinated in its intensity:

There was an overwhelming human closeness and thickness, and Leventhal was penetrated by a sense not merely of the crowd in this park but of innumerable millions, crossing, touching, pressing. What was that story he had once read about Hell cracking open on account of the rage of the god of the sea, and all the souls, crammed together, looking out?<sup>7</sup> This charged atmosphere is never once lightened. In its depths ensues an eerie psychological tug-of-war between an easy-going Jew and a cranky anti-Semite. Their struggle is as densely packed with nuances of meaning as is the milieu in which it is acted out. Yet the novel's success is due largely not to the

treatment of its main subject, anti-Semitism, but to its poetic rendering of what it "feels like" to live in a metropolis, anywhere, anytime. In its depiction of aspects of city life—the talk of mature men swapping anecdotes over their cafeteria coffee, or conniving in office politics; the experience of strolling through a city park or attending a movie—*The Victim* is unequalled. But as a study in anti-Semitism the novel is weak. For one thing, it is based on a false premise: that anti-Semitism is somehow a Jewish "problem." It is not. It is specifically and absolutely a Christian problem, one which Christian laymen and clerics must ponder soberly as they attempt, after Auschwitz, to salvage what they can out of their ideal of charity and love. As a "problem" it is their business. The Jew's concern, and his drama, derive out of his pursuit of his just civic rights—and the maintenance of those rights. This is not a matter of simplification; it is a matter of truth. For Bellow, on the other hand, both victim and victimizer are somehow "equal." The whole burden of his tale is to show how "equal" the balance between Jew and anti-Semite is—how "alike," for all their surface differences, they really are. Himmler and Anne Frank are, by some mysterious permutations in the universe, somehow "one." Are they now? Needless to say, this "ironic" point of view is one which many people would find very comforting, and I hesitate to be the spoilsport of an attitude which has by now become a fad in both Jewish and non-Jewish highest-brow circles.<sup>8</sup> But I must insist that we have here the grossest of simplifications, one which reduces the tragic—and therefore not wholly resolvable—conflicts inherent in the author's chosen subject to the symbolic meaninglessness of a cipher. The author fails once again to articulate those realities of social and emotional experience which he aimed at. In consequence, *The Victim* is about as relevant to the tragic truths of history as the posturings of Shirley Temple in her heyday were relevant to the truths of childhood.

In contrast to this sober, tightly organized novel, the one which followed was a long,

rambling work, produced in a seemingly carefree mood. It made the best-seller lists and won the National Book Award for 1953. Its hero, Augie March, is Bellow's most popular creation. Like the earlier heroes, he incarnates the author's pet themes. To note the genesis of his characterization is to shed further light on the background to these themes.

In a short story which appeared in 1950, one of Bellow's typically heavy-breathing heroes remarks on the desire of most people not to "miss out on the ride of the world."<sup>9</sup> In such an endeavor a lot will depend on a person's capacity for taking such a ride without being ground under by it. For Saul Bellow the career of St. Augustine presents an admirable example of one who confronted the challenges of the "ride" without flinching, yet without losing either the sense of self or the gifts of the spirit. Thus, the author (who seems to have read widely in the texts of the Church Fathers) has said . . . "the converted Augustines and Pauls are reborn in greater reality and become more themselves."<sup>10</sup> This is our first clue to the characterization of Augie March. Augie hooks on to the "ride of the world" with a vengeance. His nickname derives from one of his creator's favorite historical figures, St. Augustine, and his story tells of the many wild (and sometimes woolly) adventures through which he marches, ever wary, however, of any threat to his inner spirit which may be lurking in each adventure. Now the reason why types like Augustine or Paul or Augie are able, according to our author, to "play it safe," is that they have a sure sense of human limitations. They are able to bound their desires and control them in such a way that their interests transcend the dangerous lures of a promiscuous materialism and are refined into something superior to such lures. For all the splendors and horrors of the materials of their existences, theirs are the intangible triumphs of the spirit. They do not want to be Alexander the Great. So Augie, like the hero of *Dangling Man*, votes for spiritual self-development over mundane immediacies: "I sat and

read. I had no eye, ear, or interest for anything else—that is, for usual, second-order, oatmeal, mere-phenomenal, snarled-shoelace-carfare-laundry-ticket plainness, unspecified dismalness, unknown captivities; the life of despair-harness, or the life of organization habits which is meant to supplant accidents with calm abiding.”<sup>11</sup> And like Asa Leventhal, of *The Victim*, he is heedless of the heroic. At one point of his story, Asa muses this way: “The peculiar thing struck him that everything else in nature was bounded; trees, dogs, and ants didn’t grow beyond a certain size. But we, he thought, we go in all directions, without any limit.”<sup>12</sup> What strikes me as peculiar here is how an intelligent man like Asa would confuse categories so pointlessly. True, ants, dogs, and trees do not grow beyond a certain physical size—but neither does man. I have yet to behold any human being who, physically, “developed in all directions.” Man’s difference from ants and other creatures of nature depended, I had always supposed, on his capacity for inner development and his ability to express that development in external works. But what in the world does this have to do with the physical proportions of our little animal friends? Indeed, what Bellow seems to be really after is not that man should “know his limitations,” but rather should know his place and accept his burdens like an ant. Nor does he consider the fact that there is no greater arrogance than that of a willed humility. Augustine, let us remember, was, like Alexander, an empire-maker and a ruler.

Yet something more than an appreciation of his sense of limitation is at work in this novelist’s feeling for a type like Augustine. Before his conversion in 387, Augustine had been sunk in a near suicidal sense of despair. His “ride on the world” had, as a matter of fact, proved a bit rough, and he had come to the conclusion that the universe was dominated by the forces of evil; in theological terms he had succumbed to the heresy of Manichaeanism. His conversion was, in part, a psychological means of freeing himself of the Slough of Despair.

In *The Victim*, Bellow had obviously reached what was for him such a point of no return in Despair. In an interview granted to the *Saturday Review* he informs us:

I had gone to Paris in 1948 on a Guggenheim and wrote 100,000 words of a novel. It was a grim book in the spirit of the first two when I suddenly decided “No.” Actually my feeling wasn’t as mild as I’m describing it. I felt a great revulsion.<sup>13</sup>

On the heels of this revulsion he sat down and wrote *The Adventures of Augie March*, which he begins with this brisk announcement:

I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted . . . and in the end there isn’t anyway to disguise the nature of the knocks by acoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles.

Everybody knows there is no fineness or accuracy of suppression. . . .<sup>14</sup>

Note the increase in verve, in assurance of style, in metaphorical fireworks over the “record” composed ten years before. The main point is precisely the same as that with which *Dangling Man* opened: “there is no fineness of accuracy of suppression.” But whereas the earlier recorder was burdened by a romantic “weariness of life,”<sup>15</sup> Augie has decided to “love” it. *Amor fati* is his slogan—“love of fate”—no matter what. But he is misinterpreting a phrase which traditionally implied the notion of sacrificing all for a great destiny. For the romantic philosopher, Nietzsche, *amor fati* represented a heroic ideal. For Bellow it implies an unheroic acceptance of anything that is heaped on one’s bowed head—for the sake of developing one’s powers of “love”! The obvious dangers inherent in the Nietzschean view of the superman in love with his fate we are by now well aware of; but let us take stock of the danger implicit in the Bellovian view, which is the debasement of the ideal of good-will into the blind alley of a mindless acquiescence.

The tremendous effort of the author to “prove” that we should love whatever fate is meted out to us is what leads to the difficulties inherent in the prose style of this

and the two following books; for the prose is as thick, strained, and knotted as was the atmosphere of the earlier novels. It rains down upon us intimidatingly: we wonder that such a fuss has to be made to assure us that we are all Nice Guys (which seems to be the main point the author has to make about the American character). Nor are we convinced by the hero's disclaimer: "I don't want to be representative or exemplary or head of my generation or any model of manhood."<sup>16</sup>

Not much! Yet he needn't worry. Not only is he no exemplar—he is hardly human. For all his fainting spells and chest thumpings he remains as the critic, Norman Podhoretz, has observed—a cartoon character. Like Mickey Mouse or Pluto, no matter what happens to him, whether he is dropped from a cliff, or whatever, he always pops back into the same shape of the same old Nice Guy. So, finally, one asks the question: What is the reality of the experience being presented?

For all the unpleasantness of some of the details of the story, the treatment strikes one as being sentimental and coy. Although various characters are continually being compared to Caesars or Cleopatras, we are never quite told on what basis such comparisons are being made. To say that a lavatory attendant is as grand, and as well off, as a Caesar, may be inspiring to the fellow, if he be dimwitted, but it is not true—not even if he appreciates Bach.

There are a host of Jewish characters in the story, but these too are all seen as exotic, "colorful" types. The author harps on their dignity, but never allows them to exert it. Indeed, his depiction of all strata of Jewish society often seems as unreal, as falsely glamorized, as William Saroyan's trumped-up fantasies of the "happy-go-lucky" poor. The author's own knowledge of Jewish community life seems skimpy, and this makes for a severe limitation insofar as his intent may be to present a picture of Jewish life in the American setting. Most Jews in America do not happen to be thugs, romantic lunatics, or time-servers to lady hipsters.

Augie March is not, then, a book of character and drama, but rather a rich series of meditations—a longer, more opulent version of *Dangling Man*. As such, it provides a splendid tome for dipping into. There are wonderfully witty and suggestive passages on topics ranging from grand opera to mah-jongg, to vacation resorts. The volume offers an exhilarating grab-bag of anecdotes, jokes, thoughts for the Day, etc.—all worth looking at for themselves, but not realized or shaped into that integral unity which is art.

This "block-buster" of a book was followed in 1956 by a short novel, *Seize the Day*, a work which combines the tightly formal structure of *The Victim* with the exuberant prose style of *Augie March*. So much does the prose depend on the rhythms and slang of metropolitan speech that one can imagine a scholarly reader fifty years hence leafing through a primer of slang terms called *Gothic Americanese*, perhaps, in order to check the meanings of phrases like: "he's an operator"; "doing all right"; "get out of the woods"; "in dutch"; "you name it"; "hot under the collar"; "that's the ticket." The reader can make a game of finding a host of other samples like these with which the prose is interlarded. The central character, Tommy Wilhelm, is one more addition to the author's gallery of genial big slobs. Tommy's problems are basic: his father, he feels, doesn't love him enough; his wife is a beast; and he is financially hard up. Tommy's solution comes, as it must to each Bellovian hero, when he reaches a point where he must "let go," must give way to a free, uninhibited emotional response. In Tommy's case, the big moment occurs at the funeral of a stranger, when, standing among the mourners and merely curious, he bursts into tears. The people standing by take him, understandably, to be a relative; otherwise the less nice among them might suppose that Tommy's tears were being shed, not for the sake of the stranger, but because the weeper was feeling sorry for himself. As a matter of fact, the author never clarifies this point, but that's all right. Considering the awesome

mass of frustrations which are heaped on poor Tommy's head, I, for one, am quite willing to grant him the right to have a good cry. But I don't see how this sobfest solves anything—including Bellow's fictional problem, which is to conclude his story satisfactorily. Although the tear-dimmed moment is intended as the climax of the novel's action, it makes really for a most arbitrary close—adding nothing and resolving nothing. All the conflicts the author has been at pains to build up remain exactly where they were at the beginning. Granted that life may be like that, art is not.

This sort of no-ending end is typical of Bellow's fictions. In each one, the novelist ends at a point where life (or human responsibility) is taken out of the hands of his characters and placed elsewhere. In *Dangling Man*, this "elsewhere" was the Army. *The Victim* ends with the news that Asa Leventhal's wife is pregnant. A token salute to the Life-Force, this, but not a very illuminating resolution of the subject of anti-Semitism. *Augie March*, whose subject is the American character, ends with a token salute to Christopher Columbus as the hero hops about an airstrip in Paris singing "La Cucaracha." In *Seize the Day* the extra-personal intrusion is—Death.

Up to its ending, *Seize the Day* verges on being a masterpiece. More carefully plotted than *Augie March*, it has all of the latter's stylistic and evocative power. Best of all, its slob-hero is both convincing and likable. Like Asa Leventhal, he bursts through the bounds of his author's ideas and emerges in himself as a splendid human being, one who wins over our affections, and therefore makes us interested in his fate.

The same cannot be said of the hero of *Henderson the Rain King*, a novel published this year. *Henderson*—another of Bellow's hulking, bellowing characters—is a sensitive millionaire who is bored with his lot. And he has no sense of human limitations. So he flees to Africa where he is embroiled in a series of misadventures with magicians, friendly lions, and philosophizing cannibals. His experiences in this fairyland serve to re-

mind him of the superior values of "beauty." His fantastic sprees are also intended to serve the author as the framework for a frolicsome extravaganza. Unfortunately, *Henderson* himself is too dull a character to allow for any real frolicsomeness; equally boring are most of the "colorful" natives whom the hero meets on his tour. At the end of his story we find him, like *Augie March*, prancing about euphorically on an airstrip. Why he feels so good is not made clear. Perhaps he has just had a good dinner. But we wish him well and wait with interest to see what will happen when he and his creator leave their never-never land to fly back once more to America.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man*, Vanguard Press (1944), p. 191.
2. Saul Bellow, "Hemingway and the Image of Man," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (May-June, 1953) p. 341.
3. *Dangling Man*, p. 10.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
7. Saul Bellow, *The Victim*, Viking Press (1947). Compass Books paper back edition, August 1956, p. 184. All page references are to the Compass Books edition.
8. For the most blatant expression of this point of view see Leslie Fiedler, "Saul Bellow," *Prairie Schooner*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2 (Summer, 1957) pp. 103-110.
9. Saul Bellow, "The Trip to Galena," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 8 (Nov.-Dec. 1950), p. 786.
10. Saul Bellow, "Hemingway and the Image of Man," *op. cit.*, p. 342.
11. Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March*, Viking Press (1953), p. 194.
12. *The Victim*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
13. *The Saturday Review*, Sept. 19, 1953, p. 13.
14. *Adventures of Augie March*, p. 7.
15. *Dangling Man*, p. 18.
16. *Augie March*, p. 456.

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. . . The first founder of Christianity was Isaiah. By introducing into the Jewish world the concept of ethical religion, of justice, and of the relative unimportance of sacrifices, he antedated Jesus by more than seven centuries. . . .

ERNEST RENAN

## - Poems -

**SITUATION**

By NORMAN M. DAVIS

They hate me, all of them, because my hair  
Is not as straight as theirs, because my voice  
May slur some accents, skipping over some,  
And for my nose, which flares below the bridge  
And reaches toward my cheeks, whose bones are high.

I can not walk with them, I can not speak  
To their bright women, I dare not take food  
Where they feed. If in error I should walk  
Where they walk, I'll awaken cut and beaten:

I have the law, but they have sticks and stones,  
And, proverbs notwithstanding, these can hurt.  
I wonder if they hate because they hate,  
Or if they simply are afraid to love.  
Their group accepts them, but my skin is brown.

**THE PEACE BREAKERS**

By FRANCES GASS

Weep not for those who watered alien sod  
With their life's blood, nor let the fiery pain  
Of doubt sear mind and heart lest all in vain  
They died, they who, upheld by staff and rod  
Of faith in right and man, steadfastly trod  
The path to their own sacrifice, the stain  
Of men's sins to remove—with this their gain:  
To be accepted offering to God.

But weep, weep for the living who deny  
All that the dead stood for, whose deeds decry  
The law of love, who, spirit-blind, revive  
Old hates, suspicions, greed, and keep alive  
The evils that obstruct the world's rebirth  
And coming of true brotherhood on earth.

**HUMORESQUE**

By LEE RICHARD HAYMAN

The artist smiles at the gadget-desked executive  
Limousined to his money-making magnet; laughs  
With defensive dimples, having caught contempt  
From the sales-wise eyes; smiles with similes,  
Having watched the jeweled wife run to her need-bound  
Boards; laughs without love, seeing hungry awe  
Paid from the civic clubs where tycoons bring  
Benefits, dole dividends, feign father to the paying  
Public unaware of creation not rarely recalled from  
High school texts, not stamped with a century tag.

**ONE THRUST OF TRUTH**

By EUNICE POND LASALLE

When Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask,  
He babbles wisdom through the night of storm,  
His auditor the Fool who takes the task  
Of following him, of disregarding harm.

Lear names the box where long-imprisoned Hope  
Folds her prismatic wings, yet may not find  
Her secret hiding place. The lonely grope  
Down passages of science, maimed and blind.

In plunging darkness cataracts of doubt  
Thunder down caverns loud with echoing gloom  
Where jetnoise overwhelms love's wildest shout,  
Where steel walls seal within a raucous tomb.

Yet in the End-of-Things, the final dark,  
The cold north light of Truth is found. One thrust  
May pierce hand-polished walls, let in the spark  
Transforming us from fumbling shapes of dust.

**THE PIGEON-FEEDERS**

By JULIA COOLEY ALTROCCHI

It is not the young whom we find feeding the pigeons,  
The young, whom the world feeds  
With the seeds of life, the hope of the harvest-deeds.  
It is the finished, the frustrate, where no hope breeds;

It is age that gives largess of crumbs to the pigeons,  
The wintered people, whom life, with an ultimate shove,  
Thrusts to a bench, and says: Too late for deeds or for love.  
It is the old who must give what they have to a dove.

**I THANK YOU LORD**

By RACHEL WEPRINSKY

Translated from Yiddish by Reuben Bercovitch  
I thank you Lord for this:  
I see a road the moon lights clear,  
A fall of snow that drifts like life  
And does not settle, year by year.

I thank you Lord for this:  
Through grief the heart in wisdom grows  
And does without; and asks not for the joy  
Each full day's passing knows.

I thank you Lord for these:  
An hour Time-tossed to its cove;  
The withered tree beyond my pane;  
Rest descending like a dove.

# *Morris and Celia*

By CHARLES ANGOFF

**N**OBODY SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND IT, how it happened, how "she did it," and "how he ever fell for her, and at his age, and he especially, so quiet; and we all thought he was—well, you know, that he was going to end his days a widower. I guess men are strange." One woman, a widow of some twenty years' duration, was even more specific, saying, "I guess when a woman sets out to get a man, if she's that kind of woman, she can get him; but some women have self-respect, some really do."

I first heard about Morris Greenberg's marriage to Mrs. Celia Gruber some months ago when I visited my sister in Providence, Rhode Island. To be perfectly frank, I was rather surprised by the news myself. Morris had become a widower two years before; he was already seventy; his four children—three daughters and a son—were already married. . . . It so happened that they all lived far away—two of them in Michigan, one in Oklahoma, I think, and another in Canada. So Morris was left all alone, after his wife Libby died. He had enough money to live out his remaining days without worrying, but I guess he was lonely—a man of seventy being left all alone suddenly, you understand. So he got himself a room in an old-age home in a place not far from New York City. I don't remember the name of the city or the town, but I do remember the name of the home, The Golden Sunset Home. And he picked this place because he knew the superintendent, a Mr. Postal, and also because a cousin lives nearby, and Morris himself lived near the place when he was younger.

My sister knew him and his wife very well; they visited each other; my sister and her husband visited them; and they visited my sister and her husband. My sister and her husband are, were, younger than Mrs. Green-

berg was, and, of course, than Mr. Greenberg, but they liked them. And that's how I met them. And, as my sister says, Morris is a sort of quiet man, hardly ever opened his mouth when his wife Libby was with him. He would start saying something—like what he thought about Adlai Stevenson—and his wife would say what she thought about Stevenson, and Morris would sort of forget what he wanted to say. But there are a lot of such people, I mean men; their wives are like that; they do all the talking, but they get along—I mean the men and the wives. And, after all, Morris and Libby did raise four children; so, they got along. And Libby did look after him; you could see that by looking at him; he always looked well.

And when Libby died, he was lost—just plain lost. My sister had pity on him; and while she has a family of her own—three little children, the oldest only seven—still, she had pity on him and asked him to move in to their place for a while. But he refused; he was that kind. My sister would drop in on him to see if he was eating enough; he was so helpless. At first, Morris just would sit there in the living-room, looking. And my sister was frightened, you know. Then he began to come to himself, sort of. You know what they say about time healing everything? I guess there's some truth in that. Then, again, I guess Morris began to say to himself that, after all, his wife hadn't been young; she had lived already, and that helps. Then suddenly he went to this home, The Golden Sunset Home, near New York, and my sister was sorry. You know you get used to people, especially after you've known them for years; but she was also glad, because now she didn't have to worry about him. Now she knew he would be taken care of—at least somebody would know if something happened to him.

Of course, Morris wrote to my sister once in a while, but not too often. You know what I mean—once in a while. When you get older you don't write so much; writing doesn't mean so much as when you're younger. Then he wrote not so much even as before. Once, or maybe it was twice, he told about some of the people in the Home—how much he liked them. He mentioned a Louis and a Barney and a Mrs. Celia Gruber and a Mrs. Tobias. I don't remember her first name—Mrs. Tobias. So everything was good; Morris liked them all. And then, all of a sudden, Morris writes my sister that he is married now to Mrs. Celia Gruber, and they're going to live in a little apartment of their own. She was dumbfounded, plain surprised. Morris, of all people, to get married! My sister thought that with Libby, his wife, dead, he would just, you know, just get along as best he could. He hardly seemed to know what to do with himself right after Libby died. He was so lost—like his whole world went under. Libby wasn't just his wife; she was everything to him—told him what to do, what not to do; told him about his business. He had a little second-hand furniture store, in not such a nice part of town, but he made all right—a good living, good enough to give his children a nice education; and, as I said, they're all married now and very happy, with children of their own. But everybody knew that it was Libby was really ran the business. He wouldn't make a move without her telling him what to do. That's the kind of woman she was—smart, real smart. So you can understand how Morris felt when she died. And my sister and everybody was sorry for him—worried that he'd be too lonely, wouldn't know what to do. Like one woman said, "Without Libby, I don't even know if Morris will know when to breathe. Of course, I only say this with the best in my heart; he's such a nice man." And now Morris was married, and my sister and the others don't understand it.

Well, you know how it is. I got interested; my sister wrote to me so much about her being surprised, and she spoke to me about it; so I became interested and I thought

maybe I could find out something—I mean just see what it was about; I mean just find out; I only wanted to know. I did know Morris. I met him many times; so I knew he would see me. So, first, I wrote him a nice letter, congratulating him and his new wife. I told him my sister gave me his address; and I told him sometime I would like to drop up to bring him a little something for a present, and see him, and say hello to him and his new wife. He didn't answer for a while. You know, older people don't write so much. They have time—more time than younger people. Then he did send me a nice letter, a short one, but nice—said he was glad to hear from me, thanked me for my congratulations, and said he would like it very much if I visited them—him and his wife. He said, "Any afternoon we're usually in the house about four, because earlier we sit in the park if it's sunny and not too cold, and I want you to meet my wife." I don't know if I told you. I think I did. I live in New York myself, and getting to The Golden Sunset Home was a short ride on the subway; then a bus for a short ride—not a long ride at all.

So, one Sunday afternoon, late in the afternoon—and it was sort of damp; looked like it might rain, you know. One of those days I figured Morris and Celia would be home, not in the park. I decided to visit them. I already had a little something to bring them for a wedding present—a little coffee pot for making percolator coffee. I knew Morris liked coffee. Besides, it makes a nice wedding present anyway. I also got them two extra-special, beautiful cups and saucers, with fancy trimmings on the edges of the cups and the saucers. So I went there. They live in a very nice apartment building, and in a nice two-room apartment. Celia really made it look very nice—clean, nice, fine, very nice. You could tell right away that Celia was a good housekeeper. You can always tell that right away.

Morris was very glad to see me; he looked fine; and right away he said how sorry he was that his wife, Celia, was not there to greet me. Celia had to go to one of her

daughters to visit her and her little boy—a boy of maybe ten; he had a bad cold but he was getting better, and she wanted to visit him and her daughter and son-in-law anyway; and she said to Morris, "Why should you go, too? After all, we visited them only ten days ago—maybe only a week; and besides, you have a little sniffle yourself; so stay home, and I'll be back soon." That's what Morris told me; and right away I could see that Celia was not just a good housekeeper but also a good wife. You can tell that right away, too. But Morris said, "Maybe, if you stay a little while longer, you will see Celia. She will be back, because her daughter doesn't live so far away—only a short ride on the subway." So I said, "Maybe I will." He thanked me for the present and said how wonderful it was, how much Celia would like it. Then we started talking.

I looked around the room we were sitting in again. It looked fine, like I said, but in one corner, I saw something kind of tall, like a large box, almost could be a small piano, but it had a covering, a very nice covering, like a very fancy tablecloth over it; and anyway it looked nice. I didn't know what it was. Besides, I couldn't ask anyway; and besides, we were talking—I mean Morris was talking. Like I said, he seemed very happy, and the more he talked, the more it looked to me that he really looked happy, I mean—not just relaxed—but that he was happy inside, like, you might say; a load on his heart had left him. I really don't know how to describe how he looked, but he really did look like a new man. He was old, of course, but he seemed younger—younger than I had ever seen him look.

Morris asked about my sister—how she was—and he said how grateful he was to her for what she had done for him; and he hoped that my sister would come to visit him and his wife; and he said he told his wife a lot about my sister—how good she was to him. Then a smile spread across his face; and it looked as if he wanted to say something to me, because he sort of looked at me through the corner of his eye as he was smiling; but he wasn't sure whether he

should tell me. Then, I guess, he made up his mind he might as well tell me—might as well talk; and then he said, still smiling a little, "It looks like a lot of my old friends are surprised I got married."

He looked at me, sort of waiting for me to say something. What could I say, especially since that was one of the reasons why I came to see him—to find out why he got married? Not that I was prying, but you understand. I wanted to know why. So all I said was, "Oh, I don't know . . . I didn't notice, I mean."

"I can tell. They are surprised," Morris said—"even my children, though they don't say anything. My children and Celia's children are very nice; they visit us, bring the children over, very nice."

"That's good," I said.

Morris looked down in his lap, as if he were thinking about something. Then he looked up at me; it was funny; he looked like a little boy; he was bashful about something; and now he looked even better than when I first came in—really young and happy. Then he said: "I don't know why, but I feel like telling you why I got married. So many people seem to be surprised, but it was all really so natural. Celia and I liked each other. Young people call it love. Well, we liked each other, and we decided to get married." He wiped his face with his hand; a shadow seemed to pass across his face, stopping for a moment around his eyes; then it vanished. He sighed and now looked at me again, and a smile began to spread over his face.

He continued: "All my life, since I was a little boy, I used to like music—all kinds of music, like singing, violin, band concert music, hurdy-gurdy music. I used to run to the park, not far from my father's house, just to hear the band concert play, and I loved it. You know—"The Poet and the Peasant" overture, Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody," Sousa's marches, especially "The Stars and Stripes Forever." And the hurdy-gurdy music—how I loved it! That I loved best of all; it was so sad and so sweet; it made me feel good all over. Well, I used to think I

could get over it. You know, you get older, and like that, but the older I got, the more I liked the hurdy-gurdy music. Even after I got married to Libby—may she rest in peace—I just loved it, the hurdy-gurdy music." He stopped, and all sorts of memories seemed to be crowding his mind. . . .

He continued: "Even when the children came, I would like to listen to the hurdy-gurdy music. I even walked out of my way to hear it; and at the beginning I used to take my wife with me—I mean Libby—and may she rest in peace. And she thought I was crazy. So I stopped taking her along; but I still went myself. I might as well tell you I used to think how wonderful it would be if I had a hurdy-gurdy of my own—a small one, in my own house. But I didn't tell Libby. I knew what she would say. So the years went on, and the rest you know. Well, when I got to the home, a hurdy-gurdy used to come around two, three times a week, and it made me so happy. I used to talk to the owner, a very fine Italian gentleman, and he told me all about hurdy-gurdies—where they're bought, how to run them, how to keep them in order, you know; and, naturally, I would give him something whenever he came; and I sort of hinted that he ought to come more often—maybe every day, but I guess he couldn't do that. Well, some of the other people in the home also liked the hurdy-gurdy music. They would listen, but I guess they were not as much in love with it as I was. But when I noticed that there was one woman who always listened to the hurdy-gurdy, and always she would sit a little in back of the window, through which the music came; and I knew she enjoyed it very much—a shy woman and a pretty woman, if I say it myself. So we got to talking, and I discovered that she loved hurdy-gurdy music; and then one Sunday, when we were talking together in the parlor—we were talking—and she said that all her life she had a secret wish—to have a small hurdy-gurdy in her own home, but she was afraid to tell her husband because he didn't

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like music at all—not even on the radio. I mean he didn't care for it much. Well . . ."

Morris looked up at me and a smile, a very happy smile, spread across his face.

Then he said, "So that's how we got married."

I was very much moved—so much in fact, that I didn't know what to say.

And he said, "Maybe you would like to hear the hurdy-gurdy now?"

"Yes," I said.

He walked over to the object I had been puzzled by, took off the lovely cover, and there was a hurdy-gurdy—a small one, on wheels, and even with the handle to turn it.

Morris apologized: "The handle, you will see, is there, but I made one improvement—we connected it with electricity; but otherwise it's a 100 per cent genuine hurdy-gurdy."

He snapped a switch, and soon I heard "The Poet and the Peasant." It was wonderful, positively wonderful. It reminded me of my boyhood, when I used to listen to the hurdy-gurdy, too. I liked it very much then, but now I loved it. It's really amazing what not hearing it all this time did to me—it made me love it so much more. . . . I looked at Morris, and there was a glow on his face. Now the hurdy-gurdy stopped . . . and Morris turned to me and said, "Isn't it just wonderful?"

"Wonderful, wonderful," I said.

Now he went over to the hurdy-gurdy and once more snapped a switch, and soon there came from the hurdy-gurdy the wonderful melody "O Sole Mio" . . . and it was so wonderful I could have almost cried. That's how good it was. . . .

And Morris played more and more tunes, and I wished I could stay on and on. . . .

Finally, I had to leave. I was sorry I did not see Celia; but somehow I felt I really knew her. A woman who loves hurdy-gurdy music in her own home just has to be wonderful herself. And I knew what I was going to write my sister. I knew very well what I was going to write her.

# The Chinese Immigration Puzzle

By BURTON H. WOLFE

IT HAS BEEN fashionable in recent years for magazines and newspapers to print stories about wholesale smuggling of Chinese immigrants into the United States. Every six months or so a new article appears with more "inside" information about Chinese immigration "rackets," information handed out willingly by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and State Department officials.

Inevitably, these articles repeat a favorite Immigration Service estimate that more than half of the Chinese in the United States are here illegally. In one article, New York immigration officials were quoted as guessing that the population of their city's Chinatown is not the 20,550 reported in the 1950 census, but 50,000. In San Francisco, immigration inspectors estimate that there are now 80,000 Chinese, against the census report of 24,813 and the usual figure of 30,000 cited by the press, travel writers, and the Chamber of Commerce in advertisements about the largest Chinatown in the Occident. After these head-spinning estimates, the tale falls into a repetitious pattern of Chinese faking birth certificates, claiming to be sons and daughters of Americans who are really not related to them at all, and gaining illegal entrance by the thousands to the land they call the "Gold Mountain."

How many times this tale has been repeated, and how many times one highly significant question has been left unanswered! The question, obviously: If the tale is true and immigration authorities know it is, why are so many Chinese permitted to roam the streets of San Francisco and New York while unaccounted for on official records and, presumably, not even paying income tax? If more than half really are here illegally, can more than 25,000 Chinese in New York and

40,000 in San Francisco go on escaping detection and possibly deportation?

The answer, never included in articles based on information supplied by government officials, can be found easily enough in the Immigration and Naturalization Service's own records. Once uncovered, the facts reveal an entirely different side of the story of Chinese immigration "rackets." They show that while the Immigration Service relates tales of smuggling, thousands upon thousands of Chinese are entering the United States legally each year at a time when severe immigration restrictions are supposedly being imposed upon them. According to Immigration Service reports, more than 400,000 Chinese immigrants were legally admitted to the United States from 1882 to 1957, while either Chinese Exclusion Acts or 105-a-year quotas were in effect. In 1957 alone, according to the Immigration Service, 5,425 Chinese immigrants were admitted at a time when the quota on them was supposed to be 105.

These are rather startling figures in view of the immigration laws on our books since 1882. That was the year when Congress passed the first of the Chinese Exclusion Acts barring Chinese laborers from emigrating to the United States. Originally intended to last only ten years, the Exclusion Act was extended—by permitting only certain classes of Chinese, such as government officials and teachers, to enter the United States—all the way up to December 17, 1943. On that date the Exclusion Acts were finally repealed by legislation setting up a quota of 105 Chinese to be permitted to enter this country each year. This quota has been extended by various legislation, the last time by the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, and is, of course, still in effect today.

Despite these laws, more than 400,000

Chinese immigrants were admitted from 1882 to 1957, and 5,425 were admitted in 1957 alone. This is far more than 105 a year, and certainly accounts for the rapid growth of the Chinese populations of New York and San Francisco (although not so rapid as Immigration Service unofficial estimates indicate). Since these figures appear in official government records, it might be assumed that the majority of the Chinese swarming into the United States despite immigration restrictions are either finding legal means to do so or else illegal ones supported by our own government.

But all of this is not to deny that there has been an organized Chinese immigration racket. Government investigations and court trials have proved beyond question that there has been such an organized "racket," emanating primarily from Hong Kong. But this is to deny the oft-repeated explanation that most of, let us say abnormal, Chinese immigration is due to smuggling or faked citizenship.

Actually, the Chinese have been beating Exclusion Acts and the 105-a-year quota in vast numbers by taking advantage of all sorts of loopholes in a confused hodgepodge of immigration laws that were designed to be prejudicial toward them. The loopholes can be found by anyone willing to wade through the hundreds of pages of gobbledegook that make up the McCarran-Walter Act and other immigration laws. To pinpoint the loopholes, let us take, for example, one year—1957, the latest for which Immigration Service records are available—and break down the means through which 5,425 Chinese immigrants were able to enter the country at a time when a 105 quota was in existence. Let the reader brace himself now and concentrate hard for he is going to be dragged through a discussion of some of the maddest and most baffling laws ever devised by man.

To begin with, he must know that the law makes a distinction between immigrant and non-immigrant Chinese. The latter are government officials, visitors for business and pleasure, transient aliens, students, exchange

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aliens, and the like. These are not included in the 5,425 Chinese admitted to the United States in 1957, all of whom were immigrants. The number of non-immigrants who entered in 1957 was 6,230. Of course, the difference between the two classes is that immigrants are admitted for permanent residence, whereas non-immigrants enter on temporary visas or visitors' permits. We are going to see, however, by careful study of immigration records, that this distinction eventually becomes meaningless in many cases, and that many of the temporary visitors wind up as permanent residents. But first, let us concentrate on the 5,425 immigrants who were admitted as permanent residents despite the 105 quota.

Immigrant Chinese are broken down into two classes: quota and non-quota, a curious distinction in the law that immediately gives one a clue as to how the Chinese overcome the 105 quota. The quota immigrants, one might think, are those admitted to the United States from abroad under the regular McCarran-Walter allotment of 105 a year. As he examines the laws, however, he finds that this is not so. But, for the sake of simplicity, assume that it is so for the present until the term non-quota is cleared up.

The non-quota immigrants are spouses and children of United States citizens, spouses and children of natives of Western Hemisphere countries, ministers and their spouses and children, and refugees and orphans admitted under the Refugee Act of 1953 and the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. Supposedly, all Chinese in these non-quota categories are admitted for permanent residence above and beyond the 105 quota. Again, in our discussion of the quota immigrant, we shall see how this does not hold up. But assume for the present that it is so.

Under the Refugee Act of 1953, 2,000 visas a year for three years were allotted to the Chinese (as compared to 90,000 over the same period for Germans). If one looks under one table of statistics in Immigration Service reports, he will see that no Chinese refugees entered the United States in 1954, only 48 in 1955, 422 in 1956, and 1,527 in

1957. But if he looks under another table, he will see that thousands more than these figures entered the United States under the act—that 2,219 entered in 1956, for example, and 3,669 in 1957. The reason for the two different tables is that while the one with the smaller numbers refers to refugees admitted from abroad, the other with the larger numbers refers to Chinese already in the United States who are considered refugees. There are thousands here in the latter category only temporarily, and the government was taking care of them by granting them changes in their immigration status until the act permitting it expired.

That is, the government was granting these Chinese already in the United States what was known under Section 244(a)(1) of the McCarran-Walter Act as "suspension of deportation." This enabled an alien who had been in this country on a temporary visa for at least seven years and who had maintained something called "good moral character" to establish legal residence and to be naturalized five years thereafter. This section of the McCarran-Walter Act expired on December 31, 1957, and has not been renewed by Congress. (Could it be that no one ever figured out what "good moral character" means?)

In other words, what all of this leads up to is that there was a hitch in the otherwise humanitarian Refugee Act of 1953. The hitch was that once these several thousand Chinese in the United States had their immigration status changed by suspension of deportation, they were chalked up to the allotment of 2,000 visas for Chinese refugees from abroad. Thus, they used up or "mortgaged" the visas allotted for Chinese refugees, and the humanitarian act turned out to be a case of "admitting" Chinese who were already in the United States. To correct this absurd situation, Congress passed on September 11, 1957, a law permitting unused visas for refugees actually from abroad to be used up. The result is that hundreds more Chinese began entering the United States—1,527 in 1957, which were many more than the 105 quota, presumed

by so many Americans to be the number of Chinese entering each year.

In addition to the refugees, there are 4,000 displaced persons permitted to enter the United States under the act of 1948 to be considered as non-quota. The same absurd situation found in the laws regulating the refugees pertains to the displaced persons. That is, displaced persons already in the United States were chalked up to the limit for those from abroad. Since no displaced Chinese from abroad entered this country in 1957, however (presumably, the 4,000 limit has been used up since 1948), we can drop this class from our discussion of non-quota Chinese. (But we will take them up again under quota immigrants.)

After refugees and displaced persons, there are spouses and children of United States citizens to be considered as non-quota. In 1957, 904 Chinese women, 138 men, and 296 children were admitted to the United States under this category of non-quota immigrants. If they were only pretending to be relatives of United States citizens, let the Immigration Service take the blame for being hoodwinked when they already have full details about a "widespread Chinese immigration racket." Next, eight spouses and children of natives of Western Hemisphere countries were admitted as non-quota. Sixteen Chinese ministers, their spouses, and children were admitted as non-quota. And, finally, in a category termed "other classes," five more Chinese were admitted as non-quota. Thus, a total of 5,036 non-quota Chinese immigrants were admitted to the United States for permanent residence in 1957—again, over and beyond the 105 quota. (But bear in mind that this Immigration Service figure includes 3,699 refugees, while actually only 1,527 came over from abroad, and the rest were already here when "admitted.")

Now that the reader of this article is thoroughly confused, let us look at the quota category. First, for the sake of further confusion, he should know that there are actually two quotas: a 100 quota and a 105 quota, and he will find a different table of

statistics for each in Immigration Service reports. The 100 quota is for non-Chinese born in China and the 105 quota is for Chinese born anywhere. If an immigrant from anywhere is just part Chinese, he is charged up to the 105 Chinese quota, even though he may have been born and lived in England all of his life. (England's yearly immigrant quota, by the way, is 65,361. It is never used up.)

We can forget about the 100 non-Chinese-from-China quota in this discussion and concentrate on the 105 Chinese quota, which is what counts as far as Chinese are concerned. But to keep it as complicated as possible, the reader should know that the quota for Chinese is not really a flat 105 after all. Actually, the real way the Chinese quota is determined is by the concoction in the McCarran-Walter Act of a so-called "Asia-Pacific Triangle," which consists of 21 countries ranging from Afghanistan to Japan. For this "Triangle," there is a flat quota of 2,000 immigrants permitted to enter the United States each year. This, then, is the only true, flat quota, and see what happens to it.

The Japanese are allotted a quota of 185, the Chinese 105, and the rest of the countries 100 each. Totaled up, this amounts to 2,190—190 more than the flat 2,000 quota allowed for the Asia-Pacific Triangle. The result is that the quotas of all 21 countries, but primarily those of the Japanese and Chinese, are reduced to sub-quotas. If this is too difficult for the reader to understand, he should not feel alone in his perplexity. Lawyers, judges, congressmen, and immigration officials have been puzzling over this ever since the act was passed, with no one yet able to figure it out.

Forgetting this picture of sub-quotas, let us suppose that the 105 Chinese quota stands up in the year 1957. Therefore, we would suppose that 105-quota Chinese immigrants would be permitted to enter the country and no more. A check with the Immigration Service report for 1957, however, shows immediately that the number of quota Chinese admitted to the United

States in that year was 389. (In 1956 it was 647.) Now, we come to that part of the discussion which will show how the assumption that the 105 all come from abroad does not hold up, and also how the assumption that refugees and displaced persons are all in the non-quota category does not hold up.

The 105-quota figure includes only a few Chinese who have actually emigrated to the United States from abroad (mainly Hong Kong and Formosa). Most of the quota is made up of persons already in the United States who have had their immigration status changed through suspension of deportation, or private laws, or admission to the United States on the basis of being displaced persons under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. (Suspension of deportation we have already examined in its use for refugees. Private laws are just what they say—private bills passed by Congress to enable individuals to remain in the United States for all sorts of different reasons. Displaced persons were allowed specifically by the 1948 act to remain here permanently and therefore did not need the suspension of deportation section in the McCarran-Walter Act, as did the refugees.) In other words, the official quota of 105 for Chinese "immigrants" is actually taken up mainly by Chinese in the United States. And, in fact, the government allows them to exceed the 105 limit every year.

But where does the Immigration Service draw the line at Chinese refugees and displaced persons considered non-quota and those considered quota? Which Chinese refugees and displaced persons already in the United States who get their immigration status changed to permanent residents are then charged up to the limit of visas granted Chinese from abroad under these categories? And which ones are charged up to the 105 quota and for what reasons? No one is able to answer these questions. All that the Immigration Service can say is that some of the refugees with adjusted status have "mortgaged" the refugee visa limit of 2,000, while others have used up the 105-a-year immi-

grant quota. There seems to be no line of distinction.

There is this vital difference, however, as far as the Chinese are concerned: Congress has passed an act permitting aliens from abroad to use up the non-quota refugee visas. But no law has been passed eliminating the mortgaging of the 105-a-year quota. To the contrary, this quota has now been mortgaged by 50 per cent beyond the year 2,000. Since this process is continuing year after year, we may then disregard everything that has been said about a Chinese quota of 105. The truth is that there is now a Chinese quota of only half of 105—or 52½ Chinese—for as long as the present inequities continue.

That the authors of the McCarran-Walter Act knew in advance that this mortgaging of quotas would occur is absolutely evident in their having written into the law the provision that a quota could be mortgaged only 50 per cent. This was a clever move. Had they not done this, there would be no Chinese quota at all now, a situation dramatic enough for even the most ignorant public to take note of and cry for a change. But the 50 per cent stipulation keeps the quota going at least, however pitiful, and keeps up appearances.

Now, then, if the reader digested (no one expects him to understand them) all the loopholes in the law, he should turn back once again to the Immigration Service figure that 5,425 Chinese immigrants were "admitted" to the United States in 1957. Of these, 389 were quota and 5,036 non-quota. Add to this 6,230 non-immigrants admitted, and one gets the total of 11,655 Chinese who "entered" this country in 1957. Armed with his knowledge of loopholes, however, the reader knows immediately that some of this total does not really count, that some of the Chinese included in the figure are not individuals who came to the United States from abroad, but persons who were already here. The Immigration Service, precise about other details, does not give an accurate break-down for this. (One wonders why.) But let us assume that the number of 389 quota Chinese already in the United

States was 389 minus 105 (the number legally permitted to come over from abroad), or 284. Then, we know that the number of refugees from abroad was 1,527, leaving 2,172 who must have been in the United States already (1,527 subtracted from 3,699). We can then subtract from the 11,655 Chinese who "entered" this country the figure 2,456 (quota Chinese and refugees already here). This brings the figure of Chinese who actually entered the United States down to 9,119.

That explains how so many Chinese are able to enter this country each year at a time when a 105 quota is imposed. Ah, but not so fast! Certainly one cannot let that figure of 9,119 stand for 1957 when it was pointed out before that 6,230 of them are non-immigrants whose temporary visas will run out, forcing them to return abroad. Ah, not so fast! One should not assume, before more wading through statistics, that these Chinese who come over here on temporary visas ever go home again. Instead, take a look at some more statistics that disprove this notion.

If 6,230 non-immigrant Chinese entered the United States in 1957 and so many thousands entered in previous years, the question is how many have left or have been deported? Surely one would suppose that if 6,230 Chinese entered the United States on temporary visas in 1957 and a similar number entered in years past (the number in 1956 was 6,355), a similar number of Chinese are returning each year to Hong Kong, Red China, Formosa, or wherever they came from. But a look at Immigration Service reports shows that only 213 Chinese immigrants left the United States in 1957 (174 in 1956) and only 506 non-immigrants left in 1957 (1,593 in 1956). These are Chinese who, of their own will, returned to China, Formosa, or Hong Kong. In addition, 125 Chinese were deported to one of those three places in 1957 (88 were deported in 1956). The Immigration Service classifies the 125 deported as follows: one criminal, two narcotics violators, one mental defective, 15 entering without proper documents, 71 failing to comply with immigration regula-

tions, 31 entering without inspection or by false methods, three likely to become public charges, and (surprisingly) only one subversive.

All told, while 9,119 Chinese entered the United States in 1957, only 844 returned or were deported to the Far East. A check-up of other years shows similar comparisons, although the percentage of those who returned is somewhat higher, but still far below 20 per cent of the number who entered the States.

This final bit of statistical revelation completes the picture of how so many Chinese have been able to enter the United States legally despite severe restrictions upon them. Admittedly, the illegal aspect has been left out of the picture, mainly because it has been hashed over so many times in recent years. Suffice it to say that those writers who repeated tidy government explanations that thousands of Chinese are entering the United States through "rackets" are hurling literary stones from government glass houses. The government has no right to blame Chinese immigration "rackets" for the fact that the number of Chinese entering this country each year exceeds 105. The laws of the United States Government permit it, and if there is any wholesale illegality, it is the result of government wholesale illegality. It is absurd to conjure up a picture of thousands of Chinese "getting by" immigration inspectors, customs officials, and port inspectors every year without having some means other than their own organized "rackets" by which to do it.

If anyone truly interested wants a lengthy discussion of the other side of the Chinese immigration problem, he should write to the State Department for Foreign Service Dispatch No. 931, an 89-page typewritten report captioned "Report on the Problem of Fraud at Hong Kong." It was dispatched on December 9, 1955, by the United States Consul General in Hong Kong, Everett F. Drumright, who is now this country's ambassador to Formosa. In this dispatch, Drumright made three rather incredible points:

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1. Any Chinese can enter the United States, even though ineligible under immigration laws, if he has the proper resources.

2. Adequate security precautions against the entry of Chinese Communists, agents, and criminals are impossible to enforce.

3. Thousands of dollars in American pensions have been collected annually by Chinese not entitled to them.

It was Drumright's contention that thousands upon thousands of Chinese were entering the United States every year at a time when there is supposed to be a quota restriction. (Does this sound familiar?) He centered his discussion, however, on the Chinese managing this wave of immigration through a "racket" known in common parlance as the "slot system." Briefly, this "racket" consists of an American Chinese returning to Hong Kong, staying long enough for one or more female pregnancy periods, then returning to the United States with the report that he sired one or more children while abroad. Since United States law states that offspring of American citizens are automatically citizens whether born abroad or here, the Chinese creates a "slot" for a new citizen, to be filled whenever he feels like calling for his child. According to Drumright, these "slots" often were filled by Chinese who really were not sons or daughters of the Americans they claimed were their parents. They were paying around \$2,500 each for one of these slots and gaining admission to the United States through the cooperation of the Chinese to whom they paid the money. This is one aspect of the "slot racket." The other can be summarized in a quotation from Drumright's report:

About a half-million dollars a year is delivered through Hong Kong to Chinese claiming payment under various laws relating to pensions, veterans' benefits, and armed forces allotments. Payees have been receiving checks in names and identities other than their own—concubines posing as wives, money received for support of children who never existed, etc. Many Chinese-Americans who were creating immigration family claims for later sale were drafted into the armed forces during World War II. Some were casualties, and their claims of as many as six sons have been very beneficial to their wives in China or Hong Kong.

Incidentally, if one should write for this report, he will be told by the State Department that the report has not been published and therefore he cannot obtain it. But one should not accept this for an answer. It is an unclassified document which the State Department, for some mystical reason, is trying to keep hush-hush. Drumright himself says he is "under wraps because of an instruction from the State Department not to disseminate the report publicly." But he adds:

In reply to your question, I do believe, in retrospect, that our report was basically correct and that what was said in it holds good just as much today as when it was written.

It was stated before in this article that no attempt is being made to refute the idea of a widespread immigration "racket." Nor can the sincerity of Drumright, in his emphasis on the "slot racket," be doubted. This article has only been an effort to balance up what has been an entirely one-sided story. It is absurd for State Department and Immigration Service officials to state that more than 50 per cent of the Chinese in this country are here illegally through organized smuggling "rackets." It is absurd when our own impossibly confused laws permit immigration over and above the 105 quota that is really a 52½ quota.

If this in itself does not exclude the Chinese from such severe censure, some figures used in this article should. Remember it was pointed out that 90,000 German refugees constituted the limit under the Refugee Act of 1953, while the limit for Chinese was 2,000. The annual quota for British immigrants (including North Ireland residents) is 65,361, against the Chinese 105 which is really 52½. The quota for other Irish is 17,756; for Germans 25,814; for Poles 6,488.

In view of the Polish quota, especially, our government cannot offer the excuse that the Chinese restriction is severe because it is for a Communist-dominated country. This argument falls down anyway because the 105 quota was set for the first time in 1943, when China was on the side of the Allies in a war against Japanese (quota:

185), Germans (quota: 25,814), and Italians (quota: 5,645). Oh, by the way, the quota for Russians is 2,697. The argument also falls down because most of our Chinese immigrants come from Hong Kong and Formosa, not Red China. They come here because their relatives or friends are here or because they hate the tyranny of Communism or the military regime of Formosa and want the freedom of the United States. There is no evidence of organized Communist cells in the United States Chinese communities, although there are a few Chinese youth groups in San Francisco that seem to follow Communist lines. They meet regularly, with the knowledge of the authorities that they do, and their attendance is small. The newspapers and citizens of Chinatowns in the United States vigorously oppose Communism, and a majority support Chiang Kai-Shek.

So much for the defense of Chinese immigration. As for the efforts of the Chinese to get into the United States illegally, let the reader consider himself in their position. If he wanted to get to America badly enough, but a quota of 105, that is really 52½, left him with the prospect of getting on the immigration list in another 50 years or maybe never, what would he do? Yes, he would look for ways to get around that quota.

Until we clean up our own house, erase the mad maze of gibberish that makes up our current immigration laws, and write one intelligible over-all law, we have no right to tell one-sided stories about Chinese immigration "rackets." And as long as the inequalities in our immigration laws exist, we do not even have the right to boast to the world that we are living up to the democratic ideals of our Constitution, which was written, we know, by immigrants.

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. . . All the values which unfolded in Christianity, love, pity, patience, insight, restraint, the essentials of our civilization are Jewish values. . . .

SHOLEM ASCH

# from SAGES, CHRONICLERS, and SCRIBES

*Within the limitations of space assigned to this project, writings and memorabilia centuries old will be published and experiences will be depicted which were of vast and primary importance in the little-remembered, long-ago annals of Jewry and other minorities.—Editor.*

## MAIMONIDES ON THE SPHERES, THE PLANETS AND THE ELEMENTS

**T**HE SPHERES are entitled: Heaven, Firmament, Habitation and Celestial Clouds (Araboth). There are nine spheres. The one nearest to us is the Lunar sphere. The second above it is the sphere which contains the star called Mercury. Above this, is the third sphere, in which Venus moves. The fourth sphere is that to which the Sun belongs. The fifth, that of Mars; the sixth, that of Jupiter. The seventh, that of Saturn; the eighth, that in which move all the other stars that are visible in the sky; the ninth is the sphere which revolves daily from East to West.

It includes and encircles all things. That the stars seem all to be in the same sphere, though in reality they are at different altitudes, is due to the fact that the spheres are clear and transparent like glass or sapphire. Hence, the stars in the eighth sphere appear to be beneath the first sphere.

All of these spheres are neither light nor heavy. None of them is red, black or of any other colour. That they appear blue is an optical phenomenon, due to the height of the atmosphere. The spheres are tasteless and inodorous, these properties being found only in bodies that exist below them.

All these spheres that encompass the world, are round like a globe, and the Earth is suspended in the centre. Some of the stars have small spheres in which they are fixed, and which do not revolve around the earth. But the small sphere which does not revolve round the earth is itself fixed in a large sphere which does revolve.

The Ninth sphere which encompasses the universe was divided by the ancient sages into twelve parts. To each of these, they assigned a name according to the form which the stars exactly below that part seemed to assume. These are the Constellations. . . .

Of the visible stars, some are so small that the Earth is larger than any one of them; while others are so large that each of them is several times the size of the Earth. The magnitude of the Earth is about forty times that of the Moon. The magnitude of the Sun, one hundred and seventy times that of the Earth. Hence, the Sun is approximately six thousand and eight hundred times the size of the Moon. No star is larger than the Sun; nor smaller than a star in the second sphere.

Every star and sphere has a soul and is endowed with knowledge and intelligence. They are living beings who apprehend "Him who spake and the world was." They praise and glorify their Creator, just as the angels do, each according to its greatness and degree. And as they apprehend God, so they are conscious of themselves and of the angels above them. The knowledge possessed by the stars and spheres, is less than that of angels, more than that of human beings.

Below the Sphere of the Moon, God created matter unlike that of the spheres. And for this matter, He created four forms which are unlike the form of the Spheres. . . . Thus beneath the firmament, there are four distinct bodies, one above the other; the higher completely surrounding those be-

low it on all sides, like a sphere. The first, nearest the sphere of the Moon, is the body of Fire: beneath it, the body of Air; below this, the body of Water; below this again, the body of Earth. Between these bodies, there is no vacuum.

These four bodies are without souls. They have neither knowledge nor perception, and are thus like dead bodies. Each of them has a governing principle of which it has no knowledge nor apprehension, and which it cannot alter. And this is expressed by David in the text "Praise the Lord from the Earth, ye sea-monsters and all depths; fire and hail, snow and vapours" (Ps. 148:7-8). The meaning of the passage is: Praise Him, ye children of men, because of the manifestations of His might, which you see in fire, hail and the other created things beneath the sky; the power of which, old and young constantly perceive.

These four bodies, namely: fire, air, earth and water, are the basic elements of all created things that are beneath the firmament. All things—man and beast, bird, reptile, fish, plant, minerals, precious stones and pearls, stones for building, mountains and clods of earth are, as far as their matter is concerned, composed of these four elements. And accordingly, apart from the four elements, all bodies beneath the firmament are composed of a substance and form—this substance consisting of a combination of the four elements. Each of these four elements, however, consists of form and matter only.

The nature of fire and air is to ascend from below; that is, from the centre of the earth, upwards towards the sky. The nature of water and earth is to move from beneath the sky downward, towards the centre, for the centre of the firmament is the lowest point beyond which there is no lower. Their movement is not conscious nor voluntary. It is a governing principle fixed in them and a nature impressed upon them. The nature of fire is hot and dry; this element is the lightest of all. Air is hot and moist; water, cold and moist; earth, dry and cold. This last is the heaviest of all the elements. Water is lighter than earth and is therefore found

above the surface of the Earth. Air is lighter than water; hence, it blows above the water. Fire is lighter than air. And since these are the basic elements of all bodies that exist beneath the firmament, the substance of every such body, whether of man, beast—domestic and wild—bird, fish, plant, mineral, or stone, is made up of fire, air, water and earth. These four elements mingle and become changed at the time of their combination, so that the resulting compound bears no resemblance to any of them. In the compound, there is not a single particle that is fire alone, or water alone, or earth alone or air alone. All these elements have been transformed and fused into one body. Every such body possesses in itself, at one and the same time, the properties of cold and heat, moisture and dryness. But there are some in which the predominating element is fire, such as, for example, animals; in these, therefore, the quality of heat is particularly noticeable. In other bodies as, for instance, stones, earth is the predominating element. Hence, their marked feature is dryness. In other bodies again, water is the prevailing element; and their characteristic is humidity. Thus too, one body will be hotter than another which also has some heat; or drier than another which is also dry. So too, in some bodies, cold is marked; in others, moisture alone will be noticeable. In others again, cold and moisture, or cold and dryness, will be perceptible, in equal degree and at the same time; similarly with heat and dryness, or heat and humidity. In accordance with the proportion of an element in a compound, will its force and nature manifest itself in that compound.

Everything made up of these four elements, ultimately disintegrates. This process takes place in the case of some things after a few days; in the case of others, after several years. But everything compounded of them must inevitably revert to them. Even gold and the carnelian cannot but disintegrate and return to their original elements; part becoming fire; part, water; part, air; and part, earth.

Since everything that disintegrates dis-

solves into these elements, why was the first man especially told "And unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19)? The reason is because the human structure consists, for the greater part, of dust. Everything, capable of decay, does not during this process, immediately revert to its four elements. It frequently disintegrates and becomes another thing which, in its turn, changes into something else. At the end of these changes, it resolves into its elements. And so all things continually recur.

These four elements are ceaselessly, daily and hourly, changing into each other; but only partially, not completely. How so? That part of earth which is nearest in its nature to water, alters, crumbles and becomes water; that part of water which is nearest in nature to air, becomes attenuated and turns into air; that portion of air most akin to fire, is transformed into fire. And so too, a reverse process takes place. That part of fire, which is nearest in nature to air, condenses and changes into air. That portion of air most akin to water, condenses and turns into water. That part of water most akin to earth, solidifies and becomes earth. These transmutations take place slowly, gradually and in the course of a long period. Nor does the whole of the element change to the extent that all the water in a body turns into air; or all the air into fire; for it is impossible that an element should altogether disappear; but part only turns from fire into air or vice versa; and such mutual changes take place in all the four elements in a perpetual cycle.

The changes arise from the movement of the Sphere. This causes the four elements to combine and produce other substances—those of human beings and other animals, vegetables, stones and minerals. To each of these substances God gives its suitable form. . . .

You can never see matter without form, or form without matter. But the human mind divides in thought an existing body into its constituents and recognizes that it is made up of matter and form. It also knows that in some objects, the matter is composed of the four elements; while in others, it is

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simple, consisting of one substance. The forms that are devoid of matter cannot be perceived with the physical eye but only with the mind's eye; in the same way as we are conscious of the Lord of the Universe, without physical vision.

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, known as Maimonides, was born in Moslem Spain in the year 1135. His father was a judge in the Jewish community of Corduba. As a result of persecutions directed against the Jews at that time, the family was compelled to wander over three continents for many years, until it settled permanently in Egypt.

We do not know how Maimonides acquired his tremendous amount of knowledge in the Judaic field, as well as in the sciences. But he surely was the greatest Jewish scholar and thinker of the Middle Ages. He wrote a number of basic works dealing with the problems of Judaism and Jewish religion. His most important work is, of course, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, a great philosophical work in three parts. Maimonides wrote almost all his works in Arabic. His only writing in Hebrew is his code of laws, *Mishneh Torah*.

The text reprinted above is taken from chapters 3 and 4 of the first treatise of the Book of Knowledge, with which the *Mishneh Torah* begins. It tells us how the medieval scientist, Jew, Moslem or Christian imagined outer space and the structure of the universe. Though the picture of the universe given by modern science is completely different, the scientific efforts of the Middle Ages are not without significance. The scientific curiosity of our medieval ancestors was the starting point for research conducted on more correct data, from which the startling achievements of modern science ultimately resulted.

Moses ben Maimon died in the year 1204. On his tombstone an inscription was put saying: From Moses (The Lawgiver) to Moses (Maimonides) there was none like Moses.



"Saturday Afternoon"

ILYA SCHOR

# Americana—The Story of Gowanda

By CLARA WISHNER

**I**N CONTRAST to "downstate" New York's concentrated Jewish culture, the scattered Jews of rural western New York are unable to support the most primitive type of synagogue. Their entire religious life is Buffalo-oriented. In order to participate in services, they must drive at least twenty miles of lonely, hilly highway to reach the city, for this remote area of the state is still sparsely settled. Even the Senecas post-date the Revolutionary War!

When the Iroquois Confederacy joined their red-coated allies against the colonists, the Senecas never dreamed they would be burned out of their finger-like "castles." But they were, and fled central New York for the safety of British-held Niagara. Peace found them homeless. It was General Washington himself who granted the Senecas their reservations. The remainder of this newly acquired region (from the Allegheny Mountains to Buffalo) was gobbled up by the Holland Land Company. These Dutch investors widely advertised the untouched soil at rock-bottom prices. It was the plight of the demoralized Senecas, however, and not the extravagant hand-bills of the Company that attracted the first white settlers.

The Vermont Society of Friends sent a group into the Cattaraugus reservation to help the Indians adjust to the white man's world. From time to time, other Vermonters would join the original band of Quakers. A few Dutch farmers, flooded out of their swampy acres, bought land parcels from the Holland Land Company.

But it was not until after the German upheaval of 1848 that the first mass migration to western New York began. Whole colonies of German pacifists fled to the New World. Their theological similarities to the Friends attracted them to the area. Only after they arrived was the largest village in this region incorporated.

It was named Gowanda (Seneca for "beautiful valley between the hills"). Gowanda straddles the junction of three busy state highways. The state also provides Gowanda with a large amount of steady income through its operation of two hospitals: Gowanda State (Department of Mental Hygiene) and J. N. Adam Memorial Hospital (Health Department—Tuberculosis control). The Cattaraugus Creek is nature's contribution of Gowanda's economic health. Along the higher banks of this cheap power source are concentrated all Gowanda's heavy industries. The world's largest glue factory spreads along a mile of creek frontage, with a tannery and an iron foundry close by.

More people were drawn into Gowanda by industry than by the fertile land. The booming twenties brought a large Slavic element to Gowanda's prosperous mills, but the sprinkling of Jewish names on Main Street store-fronts has appeared there for three generations. These store-owners are the grandchildren of the first Jews to trade in and around Gowanda. They are respected, well-liked members of the community, active in its numerous lodges, and in the forefront of every civic drive; for the Jewish pack-peddlers that came from Buffalo to barter with Gowanda's farmers were eagerly welcomed. After the arrival of the Germans farming increased, and surpluses began building up. Mostly perishables, they rotted in barns because the season's lengthy, harsh winters made the shipping of bulky wheat and heavy cornstalks impossible. The need for someone to take these and other farm products away in exchange for small, manufactured items grew more urgent as the years passed. So it was that the "tinman," with his small stock rolled into a huge square of oilcloth strapped to his back, became a local fixture. He walked the long distance from Buffalo (thirty miles), gladly

exchanging his steel pins, needles, hand-mirrors, and sachets for junk, rags, beaver pelts, and grains.

Mostly Russian Jews, these young men were unprepared for absorption into Buffalo's specialized factories. They had little schooling beyond their ghetto cheders, but they possessed burning ambition to succeed. The small sums advanced by "Mis-pochah" for their meager stock were speedily repaid. They hired horse-drawn wagons to increase their trade. With their transportation difficulties solved, these men travelled further and faster. Their stock expanded to include washboards, pots and pans, and other large staples. As a result, the items bartered for became more valuable. Buffalo's rapidly expanded steel mills ate every piece of Gowanda scrap; good rural-clothing discards were snatched by rag dealers; bushel wheat from Gowanda's fields was welcomed by the milling industry. The peddlers gave more for value received, increasing good will and doubling trade. With a modest bank account started, marriage to Buffalo girls became possible.

It did not bother a single man to spend his Sabbath in a country barn. But an Orthodox Jew wanted to be with his family. Then, too, as the years passed, the long stretches of bad road grew harder to journey on. Opening a store in town would make earning a livelihood simpler. The best business potential was in Gowanda, with an Erie railroad station and thriving new commerce. Before signing store deeds, the married men brought their wives out for a look around town. They needed their wives' cooperation, for the women would tend store in the winter while the men visited their snowed-in customers. More than one observant Jewess found Gowanda "Jenem Eck Welt"—no synagogue, no kosher butcher, and open shop on Friday night (the farmer's traditional shopping time).

It was not until 1870 that the first Jewish woman consented to live in Gowanda. Unlike the Russian Jews who followed them, John Swartz and his wife were German (Westernized) Jews, used to living in a

Christian society. Fortunately for John, he had joined the Masonic order in Germany and participated actively in the local chapter. His wife became Matron of the Eastern Star, a considerable honor in small-town society. The three Swartz children adjusted easily to Gowanda's predominantly German-English culture. Like their parents, they were devout Jews, but in a Quaker atmosphere this religious difference was no problem. Unfortunately, not one of the Swartz youngsters remains in Gowanda. They all settled in large cities after completing college. This is not a local phenomenon but a nation-wide problem. Occupational opportunities for the highly trained youths are limited in a village, and these potential leaders are siphoned off by the broader horizons of metropolitan centers.

The education-starved Russian Jews who came into Gowanda after the Swartz family continued this practice, sending eighty-five percent of their offspring to college. It was inevitable, therefore, that Gowanda's Jewish population should remain static, with these young men and women settling elsewhere. Unfortunately, too, this secular education was the only kind available. Hiring a Rabbi to instruct a handful of boys was too costly. The distance from Buffalo prevented the children from going there for the necessary ritual instructions. But religion had a way of sneaking into school. The Christian majority insisted on a yearly Christmas play and Easter pageant with Jewish boys and girls performing their teacher-assigned roles. This background only deepened a normal first-generation rebellion against the "queerness" of their foreign parents. Russian Jewish children deplored their father's accents, their mother's wigs, and both parents' inability to read and write English. Too often they looked no further than the "American" boys and girls they grew up with for their mates. The wonder is not that fifty percent intermarried, but that more did not.

The reaction of ghetto-bred parents to such a situation is impossible to obtain. Their children speak willingly enough about the burdens of store ownership, old partner-

ship difficulties, acceptance by the townspeople. But any discussion of assimilation and other purely Jewish problems is skillfully avoided. One learns, for example, that living conditions in Gowanda proved so favorable for the Russian Jewish immigrants that they all sent passage money to impoverished, old-country relatives. So it was that Dave Simon brought his cousin Dave Pliss to Gowanda. "Uncle Dave," as he was universally known, became the most beloved of all the Jews in the area. Many tales of his generosity are still related. "To Uncle Dave," one of the town's oldest living inhabitants, "every day was Christmas and he Santa Claus—with a Russian accent!" In return, the town did everything it could to help him. The manager of the glue factory lent him a horse and wagon to spare him the arduous task he had. "Uncle Dave" walked long distances with a heavy pack. After years of wagon travel he saved enough money to buy the defunct Gowanda Furnace (1928). All Gowanda rejoiced in his good fortune. But how "Uncle Dave" (a devout Jew) felt toward the society he lived in or how the other Jews who joined him reacted must remain a matter of conjecture. It is apparent, however, that the lack of a positive Jewish life caused more than one practicing Jew to leave Gowanda.

Other reasons are given for the departure of these one-time residents. Jake Shapiro, a bachelor, found Gowanda too lonely. Jake Linz, who planned and operated the Gowanda Hotel, was so grief-stricken at the death of his wife (a local Lutheran girl) that he sold the hotel and went away. Another source informs us of Jake Linz' return to Buffalo, his marriage to a Buffalo Jewish girl, and of his being absorbed into Jewish society.

But these stories of dissatisfaction lead to a one-sided view of the picture. There were many Jews who enjoyed small-town living, just as John Swartz did. Before he retired in 1915, John helped plan Gowanda's fiftieth anniversary celebration. Sam Wallace, who ran John's store after he left, became very active in local organizations, too. And al-

though Jake Shapiro left, he sent to Russia for his cousin Abe Nagle. Abe and his wife raised a large family in Gowanda. On being interviewed, Mrs. Nagle (Abe died some years ago) did not discuss the two intermarriages in her family. She did stress the vast changes World War I had meant to Gowanda. Automobiles replaced the horse and buggy as standard family equipment. To facilitate car travel roads were leveled and paved with concrete. Even the most isolated farm family could pile into a Model T and get to Gowanda for the purchase of everything from men's socks to kitchen furniture.

This increased business meant more money for participation in Buffalo's varied Jewish life. Major holidays now became gay family reunions instead of dreary rituals. Of course, in a five-hundred pupil school system, the absence of even ten children "for religious purposes" was immediately evident. While life-long friendships remained steadfast, the Jewish child became keenly aware of his unique position, for in a small town, the pressures of conformity, although gently exerted, are almost imperative for those dependent on the "good-will" of the villagers for their daily bread. Wherever they could, the Jews adhered to local custom. They dressed conservatively, spoke genteelly, and joined every lodge they had time for. Gowanda has a complexity of social and fraternal organizations. All of them willingly accepted Jewish applicants, down to the various church youth-groups. Each Protestant sect has its own "youth leadership" and presents its co-religionists with a well-rounded program. Unfortunately, these proliferating activities prevent full participation in the P.T.A. There are never enough members to arouse interest in the school and its problems. September's initial enthusiasm dwindles by Christmas time, when the P.T.A. executives themselves stop attending monthly meetings.

Of course, this lack of a non-sectarian youth group is particularly distressing to the Jewish teen-agers. Either they identify themselves with one of the Protestant youth councils, or their social life is sharply cur-

tailed a portion of each year. Winter finds the highways to Buffalo storm-closed for indefinite periods. The boys keep busy with a variety of team activities; but the girls are the victims of social custom; and unless they are "asked" to some local functions, they are alone too often. Perhaps these unavoidable small-town disadvantages could be borne if there were some Jewish communal life. But years of close association and partnership troubles have created numerous family feuds. Outwardly, a united Jewish front is presented to the town. It is sadly true that no internal cohesion exists. This state is further enhanced by a subconscious fear of so-called "Jewish clannishness." Such charge might result in a loss of income—a prevalent fear in any vulnerable minority.

To counteract this lack of Jewish associations, children are still sent to colleges with substantial Jewish enrollments. They are packed off with high hopes and fervent prayers; but too many times hopes and prayers are insufficient to blot out a lifetime of living in a Protestant society. The ways of big-city Jews seem "queer"; their ranting about anti-Semitism is merely Jewish "oversensitiveness" to Gowanda's youths. After all, in Gowanda they were welcomed into every Christian group! Their first contact with anti-Semitism often comes when the Jewish Gowanda High graduates attempt to join the same fraternities and sororities their Christian friends bid into. The normal reaction to their rejection is shock. What follows this depends largely on the qualities of the boy or girl. Some, like many of the first generation, fled Judaism completely. In recent years, more and more youngsters have turned toward their own heritage, angered by Hitlerian excesses, and heartened by the progress of little Israel.

Inter-marriages, once fifty percent, dwindled to fifteen. The post-Nazi generation, even when marrying a non-Jew, insists on Rabbinical sanction for itself! This means that two religious ceremonies are performed, thus alienating two sets of parents, for the Jews of Gowanda are quite aware of the deepest implications of Hitler's Nuremberg

laws. They know, even if their love-struck youngsters do not, that Judaism has been forever lifted out of the religious category into the racial. They are fearful for their grandchildren, caught as these babes will be between two worlds. These parents are impressing their younger children with this fact. Here, at last, is a truly Jewish group. They are proud of their background, are eager to affiliate with other Jewish youngsters, and being intensely heartened by the establishment of a Jewish state, they are anxious to learn modern Hebrew. Then, too, the tales of "pogroms" are no longer "bubbimeises." These youngsters can see and talk to victims of Hitler's terror against their people.

The first Jewish refugees arrived before World War II. They were German physicians who came to work at Gowanda State. They had been stripped of their homes, their practices, and their life's savings, but were physically unharmed. Most of them have transferred to metropolitan areas. On being interviewed, one of the few remaining physicians remarked, "You must make very clear in your essay that not every Jew left Europe for America's golden streets." A confirmed Berliner, he finds small-town American life "too constricting." He spends his off-duty hours studying for his psychiatric boards. He will open a practice in Buffalo. There he can find some of the cultural activities he craves.

In direct contrast to his critical attitude is the easy-to-please one of Doctor F—, a survivor of Hitler's extermination camps. He attended Vilna Yeshiva as well as the Medical School. His orthodoxy has not been shaken by the complete destruction of his first family. After being "liberated" in 1945, he married a woman similarly bereft. He came to Gowanda when his shattered health prevented him from establishing a successful private practice. Unlike the aspirations of the German Jews, his are simple—to worship as he pleases, to prepare his sons for Bar Mitzvah, and to become an American citizen. When queried about small-town dullness, he shrugged philosophically, "So who complains?" A discussion of local anti-

Semitism brought this comment: "What I consider anti-Semitism, and what the local Jews think it is are worlds apart. Better you should get the town's ideas."

Another attempt was made to get an honest appraisal of the situation. This time, however, the plight of the Jewish teen-agers in Gowanda was discussed. Sheila D—, the first one questioned, is a tall, beautiful grandmother of fifty-five. Her blonde hair frames an aquiline face which still retains a youthful softness. It hardened when she was asked what should be done for local youth. She responded bitterly:

Let them leave Gowanda. There's nothing for them here. I can well understand the distress of Jewish boys and girls. I shared it when I first came to Gowanda as a bride. The usual church committees solicited my membership. To each I would announce my Jewishness. They all looked shocked, as if all Jews were dark and ugly!

In marked contrast, Sheila's Gowanda-born-and-bred husband is completely content with his life. He never co-operated with her in driving their two children back and forth to the Buffalo Sunday School. He showed no concern when their only son married an Iowa girl during his junior year at a Mid-Western university. Sheila is upset about the two religions practiced in her son's home, but Mr. D finds this circumstance "broad-minded." "My son's wife is a fine girl," he said laughingly—"as nice as the Kosher boy my daughter hitched herself to!"

Some of Gowanda's other Jews share Mr. D's views; some his wife's. She herself never airs her strongest personal feelings. She knows that her "Jewishness" might be resented, with a resultant loss of store trade. She was asked if such action might be considered anti-Semitism. She thought a long time. "That's more of a personal reaction, wouldn't you think?" But, she snapped her long fingers, "The dentist's wife at Gowanda State has more concrete examples—she's an outspoken New York City gal and will talk freely, I'm sure!"

The dentist's wife spoke at length, quoting dates, definite locations, and people in-

volved. Her first brush with anti-Semitism came when she and her husband were refused the right to purchase a cottage at Forest Park (on Lake Erie). The male nurse (also an employe at Gowanda State), who held the deed to the summer place, attended a board meeting to find out why the dentist had been denied membership. Originally, he was told, the charter denied admittance to Jews, Italians, Negroes, and Orientals. This restrictive clause was insisted upon by fifty-percent of those present at the meeting. Indignantly, the male nurse offered to sell despite anyone's objections.

"Of course," the dentist's wife said, "we refused. Who wants to go where they're not wanted?" She had barely overcome her normal rage at that injustice, when her application for the Eastern Star was returned to her. Since her husband is a Shriner, she was stunned at the Star's refusal to review her qualifications for membership. However, a year or two later, some of her friends learned about this "slur on the Star's name" and demanded that she re-apply. She is an enthusiastic member now, occasionally lecturing to the group on major Jewish holidays. No longer resentful, she would be completely happy if her four girls had a "sound Jewish social life." To help their daughters, her husband and some of the other Jewish fathers are welding the area's scattered Jewish youth into a strong organization. Temple Beth-El (in Dunkirk) is supporting their efforts, and the Rabbi's wife has graciously offered her leadership. It is gratefully accepted, for Mrs. Simonson spent years supervising teen-agers in New York City. She has proposed a fine program for these youngsters.

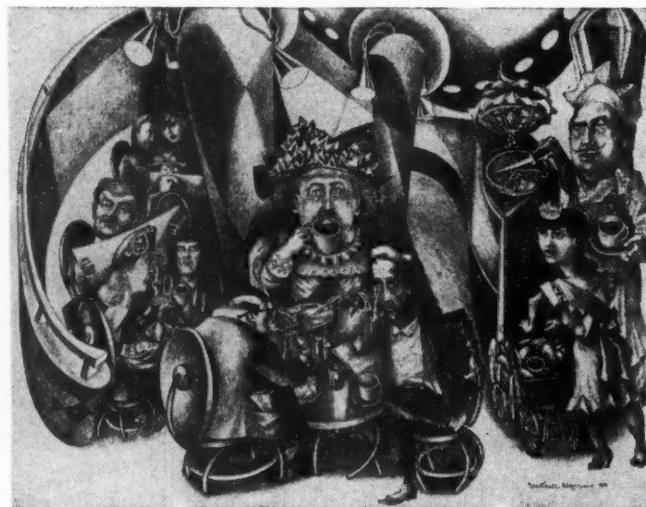
"To really know all of Gowanda's problems," the dentist's wife remarked, showing enthusiasm about this new group, "you must get to the merchants in town. They are at the heart of things—not like those of us who live outside the village." This commendable idea entailed weeks of patient listening. All small-town business men are keenly aware of the personal element involved in their work. But some common factors appeared after much probing.

The Creek, Gowanda's earliest blessing, is fast becoming a menace. Both tannery and glue works dump their raw sewage into it, killing fish and endangering human health. The towns-people are pressing to have sewage treated before it leaves the plants. This suggestion evokes howls from the manufacturers. They point out that they must import raw materials and export finished products. The cost of installing a sewage-treating system would force them out of Gowanda. Such an action (despite two state hospitals) might turn Gowanda into a ghost town. State salaries, in themselves, are not enough to support the town's merchants. Although they are certain, they do not rise with the cost of living index. And in an area where Quaker frugality is practiced, women are not as style-conscious as they are elsewhere. They can wait for Buffalo's clearance sale—the city is only an hour's drive away.

Some tax-rises might represent eventual benefits. They reflect an increase in the assessment value of local land, due to the completed State Thru-way and the approaching St. Lawrence Seaway. The Thru-way seems unwelcome, for thru-ways attract shopping plazas whose multi-stored markets draw

local customers away from town. This drawback might be counter-balanced by increased population brought into western New York by the Seaway. All real estate speculators are holding land against the happy day the Seaway is completed. Buffalo, one of the major ports on the Seaway, is busily preparing to welcome more industry to the area. Since only one direction is left for Buffalo to expand in—Southward—Gowanda will benefit. When Jewish store-keepers were alerted to this larger urban influx, they all agreed that it must contain more Jews. "More Jews mean more problems," one elderly woman said. "It means a Shul, more social gatherings, less time for our other friends." Unconsciously, she fears being called "exclusive," or grouped with a "bunch of loud-mouths."

Fortunately, especially among the youngsters, such an influx of Jews is eagerly discussed. Loyal as their parents to western New York's quiet charm are, they know that more people are going to move into the area when it is better publicized. They will welcome every Jewish newcomer, eager to have their own strong group. For them, at least, Gowanda will cease to be "Jenem Eck Welt" (the other end of the world).



Refreshment in Flatbush

MITCHELL SIPORIN

# BOOKS

Books reviewed in this issue may be purchased at the regular price through the Book Service Department of THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM, 179 West Washington St., Chicago 2, Illinois.

*The American Bridge to the Israel Commonwealth*, by Bernard A. Rosenblatt. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. 128 pp. \$3.00.

This collection of essays is designed to build a bridge of understanding between the Jewish community in the United States and the State of Israel. How is this vital exchange of ideas and of expert knowledge and skills to be achieved? Judge Rosenblatt is eminently qualified to write about the social and economic structure of Israel. From 1921 to 1923 he served as the first American representative on the World Zionist Executive in Jerusalem and was instrumental, during this period, so the "blurb" tells us, in launching the Tel Aviv bond issue. He was actively involved in a number of economic enterprises in Israel. He had organized the American Zion Commonwealth, a land-purchasing agency, which was responsible for developing such cities as Balfouria, Alfuie, and Herzlia; he served, too, as president of the Jewish National Fund in America and the Keren Hayesod, which became a branch of the United Jewish Appeal. What is more, he has been director of the Israel Land Development Company and the Midgel Insurance Company, and chairman of the Board of Tiberias Hot Springs.

Thus Judge Rosenblatt has a practical, intimate grasp of his material when he sets out to expound and defend the ideals of Social Zionism to gain support for the aims of the Jewish National Fund. Israel, he rightly feels, stands as an effective bastion in the Middle East against the advance of Communism. He is opposed to the severe economic restrictions, now being eased, which the Knesset imposed on the investment of American capital. Even more important, he endeavors to show that there is

no need to stress Judaism as primarily, if not exclusively, a religion in order to combat the charge that espousing the cause of Zionism would involve American Jews in the embarrassing political dilemma of dual allegiance. Now that Israel exists as a sovereign, independent State, such fears arise out of a false assessment of the situation. Should a world crisis arise, every American, be he Jew or Gentile, would obviously put America first; but there is no question, he argues, of divided loyalty. There is no reason why the spiritual connection between American Jewry and the State of Israel should not become closer. The return to Zion carries out the promise inherent in the heritage of Judaism. Though American Jews will not settle in Israel, it is nevertheless their obligation to render as much help as they can to the newly established State. What they have in common with the Israelis is not only the bond of blood but also the cementing ties of history and religion. The Diaspora will continue to survive. What unites all Jews is Judaism as a religious force, for it is Judaism that is the common law of the Jews.

Judge Rosenblatt discusses the economic aspects of the Zionist experiment in Israel, especially the desirability of extending the program of the Jewish National Fund so that it will acquire urban as well as agricultural land which would be held as the inalienable property of the Jewish people. He analyzes the pattern of communal organization of the various farm settlement systems in Israel, many of which offer Israelis the opportunity, if they so wish, to escape from the arena of private competition and join a cooperative farm, where all receive equal pay from what the cooperative manages to earn. Hence there is in Israel no urgent fear of

the effects of unemployment. Every immigrant is offered the option of becoming a member of some cooperative farm colony. If he finds the experiment not to his liking, he is free to leave and return to the system of competitive industry. Here, then, is a functional principle which guarantees to every man the right to work in return for which he will be granted without question what he requires for existence, and will even be permitted to enjoy many of the luxuries of life.

The fundamental attraction of these colonies for the Jews of Israel, who are individualists at heart even in their socialist doctrines, is that they make possible the attainment of social justice rather than personal security. The kibbutz has in many cases been supplanted by the Moshav, which allows free play for individual initiative. A voluntary cooperative in action, the Moshav encourages and rewards individual enterprise and thus achieves the proper balance between competition and cooperation. The success of these farm labor cooperatives is due largely to the efforts of the Histadruth. Here is a system of free or voluntary socialism that can serve as a self-regulating device for modern economic society, an ideal which the rest of the world can emulate. But the author urges upon the leaders of Israel the lesson that America has to teach: the serious dangers of state interference and economic controls arbitrarily imposed; these are to be applied "only when self-regulation, through the normal process of competition with the large public corporations, might become inoperative, in times of emergency and crisis."

Judge Rosenblatt makes a number of judicious recommendations for reforming the government structure of Israel. In a brief but pregnant essay he examines the relationship between church and state. He comes closer to his central theme when he plunges into an analysis of the Jewish problem of immigration and the right of return to the ancestral homeland. Whenever the Jew is persecuted because of his race or religion, the Law of the Return enables him to find sanctuary and a home in the land of his people. Perhaps the best part of *The American Bridge to the Israel Commonwealth* is the section which concerns itself with the attraction of investment capital to Israel.

#### THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM

The first thing to do by way of reform, the author urges, is to establish a stable currency so that the prospective investor will not be frightened off by the fear of having his profits drained off when measured in the currency of Israeli pounds. Judge Rosenblatt is convinced that the State of Israel is in a position to achieve this feat of stabilization, though it is highly questionable whether the leaders of the people of Israel would agree that such a move represents a priority of the first order. Is this at present more pressing than the need for housing facilities or the care and absorption of immigrants?

Judge Rosenblatt hammers home the thesis that government interference in business should be reduced to a minimum so as to attract the largest possible share of capital to be used in building up the State of Israel. He would like to have Israel develop "a system of co-existence with private industry, in which both public and private corporations will compete for the benefit of the body public as a whole." It is to be hoped that his proposal will be given sympathetic consideration by the powers that be in Israel.

CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG

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To be published March, 1960

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*International Propaganda: Its Legal and Diplomatic Control*, by L. John Martin. University of Minnesota Press. 284 pp. \$5.75.

Early in April, 1958, George V. Allen, director of the United States Information Agency, remarked in a television interview that "Americans should grow up" in considering the realities of the propaganda conflict. His purpose was re-assurance that United States propaganda, despite occasional defeats on tactical and policy levels, actually was not so ineffectual as our own press seems to think—when roused by some clamorous occasion to think about propaganda at all. Both the government and the people, he said, must confront the new realities of international relations, whereby the means of contact between peoples have been immeasurably extended beyond the devices of traditional diplomacy.

That the accelerated revolution in communications has transformed the nature of international relations has been apparent since the war of 1914-18. But Mr. Allen's sophisticated awareness of this transformation, as he speaks for the official practitioners of propaganda, may be itself naive. One of the very realities which have to be faced first of all in this age of propaganda is the immaturity of the public in contending with it—an immaturity that will be a long, long time in passing, as it represents attitudes that were a long time in developing. And even if the public does "grow up" in its regard of propaganda, the new understanding will of itself bring little re-assurance. While the older forms of contact among nations have been slowly moving in directions of increasing mutual responsibility and control, propaganda—the quintessential instrument of modern ideological conflict—is proving to be inaccessible to such ideas and procedures of order in the relations of nations as have come to be regarded as a body of international law.

For recent evidence of both the transformation of international relations by propaganda and of the enormous difficulties in trying to institute controls, we need only turn to the attempt by the United States to establish a concept of "indirect aggression" in dealing with the Lebanese crisis, just a few months after Allen's telecast. On the

#### THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM

one hand, propaganda of the most strident, clearly inflammatory nature is one of the fundamental, day-to-day realities of life in the Middle East—being an essential element of both Nasserism and of the infiltrating Communist ideology. On the other hand, the effort to define what is inflammatory propaganda, to pronounce it a form of aggression, and to provide effective means of control is attended by difficulties that are inseparable from the conflicts of interests in the area, and insoluble alone.

In the view of L. John Martin, who has prepared the first comprehensive analysis of controls upon international propaganda, there is no possibility of going beyond the domestic laws of individual nations and the negotiator force of traditional diplomacy. "Because of changing ideologies, even within a state, the subtleties of modern propaganda, and the difficulty of definition, it is inconceivable that international law will ever control propaganda, no matter what its content, so long as the sovereignty of states is recognized." This conclusion, after so exhaustive and documented a study as Martin has accomplished, does not suggest the sort of re-assurance that Allen feels will accompany our "growing up" in our thinking about propaganda. And if we extend it to apply to the realization of propaganda as becoming itself a principal form of contact between nations, we are confronted by a vision of greater, not lesser, problems, as techniques are refined and amplified, without practicable controls. There may be precedents in international law for establishing limitations even upon the most totally destructive of nuclear weapons. But the propaganda of a Nasser, limited only by the directions of nationalism and ambition, can set off chain reactions of incalculable and uncontrollable consequence.

The very fact that Martin's book is the first of its kind signifies the seriousness of the problem of international propaganda. And it is even somehow appropriate that the least thorough and incisive portions of his work should be his early chapters dealing with history and definition. For the paradox of his subject, illuminated with excruciating clarity by each day's events, is that it evades simple recognition and definition, while visibly affecting nations and continents. A

single rifle shot, fired in a border "incident," may be clearly identified as an event. But acts or even currents of propaganda are not so clearly distinguished from the routine operations of government.

The weakness of the author's deliberately brief reviews of the history of propaganda and of the range of definitions is that he does not relate this characteristically modern activity to problems of the discovery and profession of knowledge which have persisted since the origins of Western philosophy and which continue to enframe our conceptions of contemporary issues. As he proceeds to examine the activities of agencies devoted to propaganda, and the statements of jurists and political scientists bearing upon the applications of international law to propaganda control, his work begins to take on greater authority.

Then he develops comprehensive, meticulous examinations of international agreements for the control of propaganda; of domestic laws relating to propaganda practiced both within particular states and from outside; of the application to the control of propaganda of laws and conventions bearing upon extra-territorial rights and responsibilities; and of the means and possibilities of control by diplomacy. These examinations are authoritatively supported by a body of references that is one of the most valuable features of the entire study. His citations themselves form an invaluable resource of statutes, treaties, state documents, judicial opinions, journalistic reports, and other relevant material drawn from all countries.

In evaluating Martin's work, one can say that it is for once emphatically proper to speak of a "contribution" to an area of concern and study—without the all-too-usual connotations of patronized triviality. In fact, he has contributed a work that is hereafter essential to the consideration of propaganda in international affairs. As such, it must inevitably inform that maturity so desperately required in this era of perpetual crisis. But there must be no mistaking the grounds and implications of his conclusions for signals of re-assurance. Propaganda is here to stay—and we have barely begun to work out ways of living with it. We must grow up to that.

MARTIN S. DWORKIN

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*Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism. From the writings of Abraham J. Heschel. Selected, edited, and introduced by Fritz A. Rothschild. Harper & Brothers. 279 pp. \$5.00.*

Abraham Joshua Heschel has been called "the most articulate interpreter of Hasidic thinking" and a "mystic." On the other hand, it has been said that he "does not advocate mysticism or other worldliness." In a rather extreme and, to this reviewer, unwarranted critique in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* (April, 1956), Meir Ben-Horin spoke of Heschel's mysticism (which he calls Ineffabilism) as having, at a certain point, totalitarianism as its "ultimate social expression." All of these descriptions testify to the great impact which Heschel's works have had upon the Jewish intellectual world.

This volume is designed to present "the central ideas of Heschel's philosophy" in his own words. The editor has arranged portions of his major works in English, such as *God in Search of Man*, *Man Is Not Alone*, and *Man's Quest for God*. Also included are selections from other writings and lectures

of Heschel, including a highly moving statement entitled "What Is Man," which was delivered as an address in Chicago in 1957. This latter statement alone (and certainly along with its parallel passages in Heschel's major works) is a sufficient rebuttal of Ben-Horin's attempt to associate Heschel's thought with mysticism, which "ultimately expresses the rejection of man." For Heschel correctly interprets Judaism as holding that man is the very symbol of God, deserving of reverence, and the object of God's concern.

The editor has introduced the selections with a helpful essay on Heschel's philosophy. At the end of the book the editor has included a bibliography of Heschel's writings as well as a selected bibliography of articles dealing with his works. The bibliography will remind the general reader of what the scholarly world has long known—that Heschel has long been a creative student of Jewish philosophy as well as an articulate and illuminating interpreter of Jewish thought.

The editor has chosen his selections wisely, and has perceptively arranged them

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in "as systematic a manner as possible." With Heschel's writings this is a difficult task indeed. The reader, whether he be an expert or general reader, is, at best, likely to find Heschel's style lacking in order. He has been referred to as a poet. Indeed, there is religious poetry in his works. There is also argument, sometimes interrupted or terminated by the poetry and the many aphorisms (not all of them effective) which are familiar features of Heschel's works.

The difficulties in Heschel's style and thought, however, do not diminish the essential importance of his writings. His works are not an exposition, written in the past tense, of what once existed. They are a demonstration, written in the present tense, of Jewish ideas and mitzvoth. Because he understands and can share not only the thought, but the life, of the Eastern European Jewry in which he was nurtured, his is the most important interpretation of that now-martyred society and the spiritual significance which it and Judaism contain.

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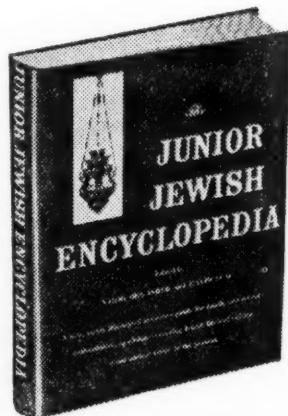
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*Between Day and Dark*, by Charles Angoff. Yoseloff. 620 pp. \$4.50.

In a leisurely manner, Charles Angoff is producing a remarkable fictional work which, when it is concluded, will offer the reader the most comprehensive fictional portrait of the American Jew yet offered in the United States. His latest novel, the fourth in a series depicting the lives of two Jewish families in America, is entitled *Between Day and Dark* and it continues the chronicle of the Polonskys.

The reader who is unacquainted with the earlier volumes may have some difficulty in following the development of the many characters in this novel. But the reader who knows Angoff's world will follow with absorption the story of David Polonsky, his parents, and his myriad of relatives. There are so many plots, counter-plots, and subplots that it is difficult within the compass of a review to trace all the people and all their experiences. Nevertheless, there are in *Between Day and Dark* a number of highlights which make this book, in many respects, Angoff's most powerful creative work in a career which already is a notable one.

The relationship between David and his girl-friend Alice is drawn with compassion and with honesty. Alice does not understand David's obsession with things Jewish. We gradually become aware that in her quiet way Alice is something of a self-hating Jew, while David, as a Harvard graduate and a young man attaining maturity, realizes the attractiveness and value of his Jewish background. When the book ends, David leaves for New York to work with Harry P. Brandt (H. L. Mencken) as an editor. You know that the romantic relationship between the two young people is about to end, mainly because it founders on the rocks of Judaism.

Other relationships of characters in the earlier volumes are expanded and developed in this book. David's various aunts and uncles, now older and in many instances in ill health, are unhappy and their marriages fall apart. Disease and death are prevalent and Angoff is especially good in piling up his medical ailments and showing their effect on human relationships.

One of the finest things in this book or

in any of his books is the story of Beryl, the "specialist" on Russia, who exploits his "knowledge" to become one of America's leading journalists and an influential voice in bringing to the attention of Americans the importance of the Russian Revolution. Beryl is a fraud and Angoff's portrait of him is long, thorough, and utterly devastating. The illusions held in certain circles about the idealism of the Soviet experiment are offered by Angoff in a rather caustic manner; and for the first time in American-Jewish fiction a novelist has had the courage and knowledge to depict the 1920's in relation to Communism in a way that makes us understand why certain Jewish circles were seduced by Communism and how disillusionment set in. This is a very valuable section and takes up more than 100 pages of the novel.

Angoff is not yet finished with his chronicle. At least three more books are due to be published on the Polanskys, their friends, and the American experience. Angoff's project already has gained him thousands of readers and high critical acclaim. *Between Day and Dark* will enhance his reputation and strengthen the view that he is engaged in an enormously successful and valuable creative work.

HAROLD U. RIBALOW

#### NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS

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*Anne Frank: A Portrait in Courage*, by Ernst Schnabel. Translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston. Harcourt, Brace and Co. 192 pp. \$3.95.

Perhaps it is best to state what this book, with its somewhat misleading title, is not and does not purport to be. It is not a biography of Anne Frank; it is not, in the main, a portrait of her courage; it is perhaps not even chiefly about her. It is the magic name of Anne Frank, however, which gives this book both its cohesion and its reason for being.

Ernst Schnabel followed the trail of Anne Frank and, in the process, interviewed forty-two men and women who knew Anne either in Germany or later in Holland and finally in the Nazi extermination camps. As the author put it, ". . . it is a delicate trail, winding to schools and through dreams, across the borders of exile to the threshold of her hiding place—and at the end becoming the pathway to death." The interviews sharpen certain features in the portrait of Anne Frank as her own diary had painted it. They do not, however, contribute many new elements. It is remarkable that the interviewees, without exception, withstood the impact of the growing Anne Frank legend and maintained their perspective. There is no evidence that any of them worshipped her memory or even glorified it. Perhaps this is even more remarkable since both the Diary and the multi-language stage versions had actually caused several to become celebrities in their own right. Whereas some, to be sure, commented on the power of her eyes, and others were impressed with her childish and warm optimism, and still others with her innocence and courage, few saw her as very special or very different in her total personality.

Although our knowledge of Anne Frank is merely confirmed by this book and hardly enriched, Ernst Schnabel's book sustains one's interest throughout. It gives an effective over-view of the daily lives of the hunted and of their physical and moral anguish. What becomes especially clear as a result of the interviews is the heroism of the non-Jews who, at considerable danger to themselves and much sacrifice, sheltered the Franks and numerous others like them.

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Perhaps the tragedy of Jewish suffering has been so powerful as to crush all evidence of deeds which might have made it yet worse. The time may well have come, however, both to resurrect and to tell some of the stories of heroism, selflessness, conscience, and courage. What the interviews reveal also, shockingly and tragically, is the psychology of the hunted, the mixture of hope and fear which keeps them alive, the alternating optimism and despair. The matter-of-factness with which, according to survivors, some of the inhabitants of Auschwitz came to look at the smoke-stacks of the crematoria, learned to expect death at Belsen, is at once a document of horror of our time and telling evidence of the human instinct for survival. Schnabel's interviews with the people who crossed the Franks' path give a very vivid picture of the mental climate among the Jews and of the Gentiles brave enough to maintain contact with them.

Like *The Diary of Anne Frank* itself, this book tells a tragic chapter in the story of our time. As yet, our memory is fresh and our perspective is maintained. As that memory fades, however, it is conceivable that a very considerable legend will develop around the warm, agreeable child that was Anne Frank.

LOTHAR KAHN

---

*The Counterfeit Traitor*, by Alexander Klein. Henry Holt & Co. 301 pp. \$3.95.

Into the placid life of a Brooklyn-born American, Eric Erickson, a naturalized Swedish subject, came in 1939 a sensational offer and a daring challenge. He was asked by the then American ambassador in Stockholm to become a spy in the Allied cause. The United States was not yet at war with the Nazis and the ambassador was acting principally in behalf of England and France. The Germans had already invaded and subdued Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Eric Erickson was a successful Swedish business man, importing and exporting various merchandise to and from Sweden. His main interest centered on importing oil and gasoline. His reputation had been unimpeachable, and, until he met with the ambassador, his sympathies, expressed in public

and in private, were with the enemies of Hitler. He was, moreover, greatly disturbed by the news of unending German successes on all military fronts. He felt that the proposition made to him would affect his favorable standing with his German associates in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, and though he would have to report his findings to his new superiors in Stockholm, he accepted the position on condition that he receive no compensation except expenses in the course of duty. *Counterfeit Traitor* deals with Erickson's adventures during the period of his espionage activities.

In preparation for his forthcoming venture he had to undergo a metamorphosis politically and socially. He had to seek occasions to declare publicly that he believed in the Nazi cause and that he subscribed to their unspeakable acts. He thus lost life-long friends and his brother in the United States denounced him as a traitor to decency and renounced him. He also had the delicate and dangerous task of convincing Nazi agents in Sweden that he was a bona fide Hitler disciple. He succeeded and was permitted to pursue and further his "business" ends in Germany.

Early in his career as a spy—a vocation that was to last for four years—he was convinced that one of the most vulnerable sides of German military economy was its supply and stocks of petroleum products. With these depleted or destroyed the Allies' chances of winning the war would be immensely improved. Erickson brought most valuable data about the locations of Nazi gasoline storage points, but it took nearly two years before the Allies were able to act upon his disclosures. Eventually, the Allied costly bombing raids on German and Romanian oil fields helped to shorten the war.

In the course of his activities in Germany Erickson led a dangerous life. He had to enlist collaborators in Germany. In each case he gave them written assurances that the victorious Allies would recognize their services and reward them accordingly. He returned to Germany time and again always at the risk of possible betrayal and treachery on the part of his co-workers. He was repeatedly examined and questioned by the Gestapo about the extent of his devotion to the Nazi regime and aims. On one of his

visits to Leipzig he had to kill an old Stockholm acquaintance who, he suspected, was about to report him to the police. Erickson "silenced" the man.

In addition to his reports on the German refined petroleum supplies — information that upon his arrival in Stockholm was immediately relayed to England—Erickson also brought an eye witness account of German bombed cities, shortages of food, and the arrogance and bestial behavior of the German ruling caste.

In pursuit of his purported business schemes for improving the steadily dwindling (thanks to him) fuel reserves of the Germans, he was able to meet in person the abominable Heinrich Himmler and hoodwink the killer into accepting a plan to bolster the sagging German fuel economy, a project which, incidentally, was never realized but which permitted him to travel with impunity throughout German-held territories.

*Counterfeit Traitor* makes worthwhile reading and introduces a courageous personality. Told with enthusiasm in the third person by Alexander Klein, it tends to cause the reader to forget that the numerous dialogues in the book are all recited from memory and that some of Erickson's espionage escapades are unsupported by witnesses. That he did a noble service to the Allies by his heroic exploits is attested to, however, by the official testimony of our government. We salute him and congratulate Alexander Klein upon writing a valuable book.

BENJAMIN WEINTROUB

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*Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*, by David Bakan. D. Van Nostrand Co. 326 pp. \$5.50.

The thesis of this book is that "the contributions of Freud are to be understood largely as a contemporary version of, and a contemporary contribution to, the history of Jewish mysticism." Professor Bakan asserts that a full understanding of psychoanalysis is incomplete without a knowledge of Jewish mystical thought out of which it sprang. He therefore probes the nature and development of Jewish mysticism and indicates the close similarities between these two forms of human soul-searching.

The book begins with a discussion of the origin and nature of Freud's psycho-analysis. His personal life and his acute sensitiveness to the anti-Semitism that pervaded Vienna during his formative years are made clear, as well as his positive identification as a Jew. The point is then stressed that Freud deliberately concealed the Jewish sources of his ideas in order not to handicap their reception by the Gentile world.

The second part of the book sketches the development of *Kabbala* and *Zohar* and the idea of free association expounded by Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia of Spain in the effort to "unseal the soul, to untie the knots which bind it." A chapter is then devoted to the tragic Chmelnitski period which brought havoc and death to thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe and subsequently led to the abortive and fraudulent messianic episodes under the leadership of Shabbati Zevi and Jacob Frank. The section ends with a brief discussion of chassidism.

Freud's writings on Moses are dealt with in Part Three. Professor Bakan maintains "that the primary key to the understanding of Freud is contained in his concern with Moses." It is his belief that Freud, while denying any knowledge of either Hebrew or Yiddish, could not help learning about Jewish mysticism in his youthful environment and, willy-nilly, participated in the historical continuity provided by chassidism. Although he was "consciously or unconsciously obscuring the cultural origins of the problems with which he was coping," he nevertheless approached the study of Moses from the point of view of the Jewish mystic. In his essay on the Moses of Michelangelo he is critical of Moses the Lawgiver, since he holds him responsible for imposing "the yoke of the Law" upon the Jews, thus echoing the traditional criticism of Jewish mystics. In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud deliberately turned Moses into an Egyptian. Viewed from Freud's theory of dream interpretations, Moses was a Jew transformed into a Gentile by Freud in order that he himself would cease to be Jewish. "Through the image of Moses . . . Freud becomes a Gentile psychologically as he makes a Gentile of Moses." Professor Bakan reminds us in this connection that both Shabbati Zevi and Jacob Frank ended as apostates. Yet

with Freud this was not a simple wish for apostasy; by making Moses an Egyptian he hoped to ascribe to him the curse of anti-Semitism and thus free not only himself but the entire Jewish people of this perennial affliction. "Thus Freud plays the role of a new Moses who comes down with a new Law dedicated to personal psychological liberty."

Part Four is devoted to an interpretation of the Devil image as suspended super-ego. Here the author implies that Freud had to experience consciously the unconscious experiences of others in order to explain analytically how the human mind functions. It is at this point that the Devil theory plays a metaphoric role in Freud's thought. His desire to play the Devil in the traditional sense of the magician or healer led him to the discovery of transference. He then developed the theory that the traditional Devil is, psychologically, the permissive super-ego—the force that permits man to violate the precepts of the super-ego. Since this rebellion against the super-ego occurs most often in dreams, Freud committed this rebellion consciously in the effort to interpret them to man's benefit.

The final section of the book discusses in some detail the written works on Jewish mysticism and stresses their peculiar relevance to psycho-analysis. Quotations from the *Zohar* and the *Berakoth*, as well as from Freud's writings, are presented to indicate their essential intuitive similarity. Word play, co-incidence, numerology, and other similar means are employed by both in the effort to plumb the hidden meaning of dreams. Freud's concept of sexuality is likewise shown to be startlingly close to Kabbalistic tradition. Jewish tradition favored the concept of "be fruitful and multiply" and shunned the theory of sexual asceticism. Kabbalists developed the mystical relationship between God and the Shekinah and described man's yearning to be united with God in sexual terms. Freud paralleled this concept of mystical sexuality in his important contribution of the Oedipus Complex—a concept that seizes upon the deep mystery of human existence.

This brief summary of Professor Bakan's book should indicate its speculative and stimulating nature. Professor Bakan has ob-

viously read deeply into Jewish mystical writings and is intimately familiar with the psycho-analytic literature. In his effort to demonstrate his thesis he emulates both the Jewish mystics and the psycho-analysts in finding both telling similarities and profound meanings in passages, phrases, and numbers that appear only casual or co-incidental to the uninitiated. Even to them, however, the book has much to say and will prove highly rewarding reading.

CHARLES A. MADISON

*Mao's China*, by Ygael Gluckstein. The Beacon Press. 438 pp. \$8.50.

Although nearly a decade has passed since the Communists absorbed China, many Americans still live with a number of delusions. The main symptom is the conviction that (1) Mao's China will collapse at the very moment when Chiang's legions storm across the Formosa Strait; (2) it is only a pliant tool of Moscow; and (3) it will vanish if we ignore its presence and wish it away hard enough. Accompanying these popular delusions is the belief that nothing positive can be accomplished by the Chinese Communists.

If these misconceptions can be remedied at all, books such as Ygael Gluckstein's will do it. It is a massive and scholarly attempt to explain how China, abysmally backward and poverty-stricken, is being transformed into a mighty industrial and military power. Gluckstein's method of investigation includes a careful scrutiny of the public documents — the mainland press, government reports and the few questionable statistics released, and translations issued by the American Consulate General in Hong Kong. In all, a rather limited approach — he never visited China — but partially atoned for by his perceptive scholarship and conclusions.

Since this is a book about a revolution, Gluckstein concentrates on what happened after the initial assumption of power by the Party. He examines the different layers of the Chinese class-structure and what they have to gain or lose by the change. He finds that the existence of a privileged state and party bureaucracy exemplifies the utter lack

of classlessness in "Marxist" China. Moreover, he makes clear that Mao's party is not a peasant party, but instead is composed of former peasant military officers and party cadres. The peasant, who suffered under the Emperors, the Republic, and the Kuomintang, continues to be sacrificed in China today, where, as Gluckstein writes, "born into a world of industrial giants and intent on quick industrialization, the new élite does not limit itself to merely exploiting the peasantry. It is set upon its total expropriation."

At the same time at which this process is going on China seems to be fulfilling the prophecies (and fears) of Marx in a way in which the Party would rather not have mentioned. Professor Karl Wittfogel has written elsewhere that Marx never believed in the feudal-bourgeois-socialist chain of events for China. Instead, he thought that China was bound to be a despotic Oriental society which did not "necessarily evolve [but] stagnated for centuries [while] the despotic government had entire control of production, revenue, property, and social relations."

There is little difference today, Gluckstein writes, except that centralized control of people and resources seems to be more absolute. And it is this which lends the Chinese Communist Revolution its essential impact. In the near future China will be able to take her place alongside, if not ahead of, the major Western industrial powers and Japan. Will that result in economic war, military aggression, rupture with the USSR over Sinkiang, Mongolia, and Korea, or hegemony over Asia's millions? Ultimately, he concludes, China will be "the strongest and most impregnable citadel of Stalinism . . . and . . . if she is kept in isolation, will probably make its Russian Stalinist precursor seem mild by comparison. Mao's China is and will be an important factor strengthening Stalinist exploitation, oppression, and rigidity. . ." The lesson the author would apparently have his readers learn is that playing ostrich with Communist China might keep us 99.44/100% morally pure but not necessarily healthy and wise.

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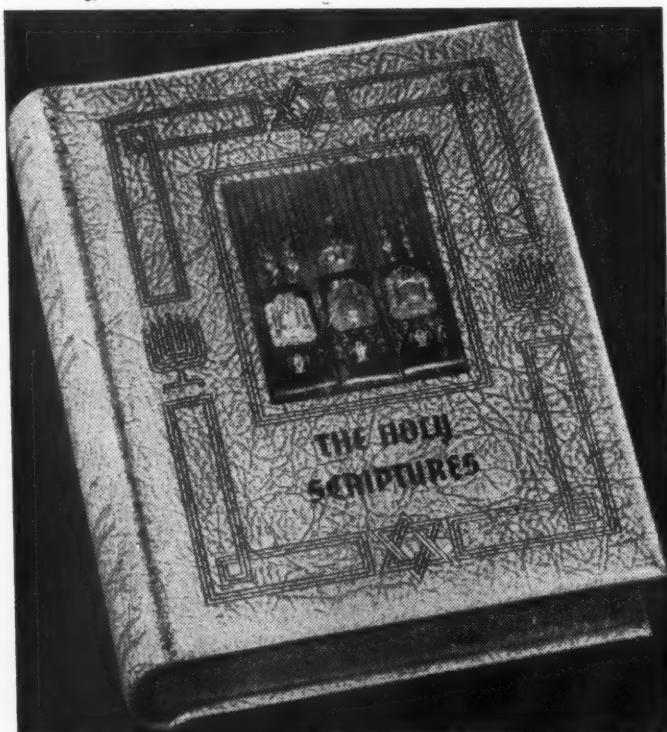
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*The Fearful Choice*, edited by Philip Toynbee, Wayne State University Press. 112 pp. \$2.50.

This is an important little book. It has already created a considerable sensation in England where it was first published, and it is very much to be hoped that it will do likewise here. Toynbee believes with the greater part of the rest of humanity that nothing could possibly be worse than a nuclear war. Under no circumstances may we view, then, the appeal to the force of arms as a possible resolution of the conflict between East and West. Russia will not be persuaded. America might. If America is not persuadable that there must be a cessation of nuclear war thinking, then the English must unilaterally withdraw from the arms race, renounce the use and possession of nuclear weapons, and refuse to allow the continued presence of American arms on English soil. England must also try to persuade the other countries of Western Europe to follow her example. "We must try to build up a neutral bloc throughout the world dedicated to the repudiation of all nuclear weapons." America would then be unable to wage a nuclear war, and Russia, so Toynbee argues, would have no conceivable motive for waging one.

These ideas were submitted in pamphlet by Toynbee to a number of distinguished Englishmen, most of whose replies are printed here. Some are in entire disagreement, others in partial agreement, and still others wholly in agreement. Lord Portal thinks that fear is a bad adviser. John Hare thinks the policy recommended by Toynbee is ill-advised appeasement. Richard Löwenthal considers it equivalent to unconditional surrender in a most interesting essay which has some very questionable ideas in it. Roy Harrod, the economist and Oxford don, thinks that the instinct of self-preservation will somehow get us through! No doubt Hitler and the dinosaurs thought so, too. Nigel Nicolson wants to see the world frozen by fear into a stalemate. He wants armed force to become muscle-bound. It is a brilliant reply. The Archbishop of Canterbury considers that it is never right to settle any policy simply out of fear of the consequence, and that sincerity and humility are

the best approaches to the Russians. Alan Bullock is all for negotiation; so is A. J. Ayer. Kingsley Amis is prepared to go on as we have been doing rather than take the risk of a Russian occupation that would result in the slaughter of the innocents and the starvation of the rest. Joseph Grimond agrees with Toynbee's general attitude. Stephen Spender doesn't agree, and believes that we ought to depoliticize the issue of the destruction of humanity. C. M. Woodhouse likens Toynbee's recommendation to Gandhi's advice to the British in 1940, to let Hitler and Mussolini "take possession of your beautiful island if they wish." He thinks that disengaged observers ought to be engaged in diagnosis and prognosis rather than in prescribing remedies. Noble Frankland considers that the abandonment by England of nuclear weapons would not decrease or increase the chances of a nuclear war. Stuart Hampshire believes in step by step diplomatic bargaining. John Davy considers Toynbee's recommendations impractical in view of the fact that we are dealing with mad men. Endless conferences, he feels, may have a sedative effect. J. B. Morton in the main agrees and thinks in terms of disadvantageous agreement. Canon John Collins mainly agrees and thinks the problem both a political and a moral one. The Bishop of Chichester wants an independent chairman, respected by both sides, to arbitrate. A. J. P. Taylor wants to share the secrets of using atomic energy peacefully and usefully with the Russians as a way to their heads and hearts. "Where there is no vision, the people perish," says Arnold Toynbee; let us therefore put first things first, and make sure of preserving the human race whatever the temporary price may be. E. M. Forster agrees, and Nigel Gosling agrees with the main argument, but feels that war can be avoided, not by "loving one's enemies" but by "loving our neighbors."

Toynbee finally examines all these views, and in doing so puts the issues squarely before us. We shall have to ask ourselves the question whether we are going to continue to be parts of the problem or make ourselves parts of the solution.

ASHLEY MONTAGU

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**Congress and the American Tradition,** by James Burnham. Henry Regnery Company. 363 pp. \$6.50.

James Burnham, once a Marxist and now an editor of the conservative National Review, has written a provocative book whose title should have been more appropriately "The Decline and Fall of Congress."

The tendency of strong government toward concentration of power was the key danger which the Founding Fathers "were unanimous, or nearly so, in wishing to prevent." The Founding Fathers provided us "with a framework marvelously apt for blocking the concentration of governmental power (sovereignty) in any single agency." The political ideas of separation of powers and checks and balances "are at the ineradicable core of the American governmental tradition." Yet, our present governmental system was deliberately devised to be strong and overcome the obstacles which the impotent American government under the Articles of Confederation found insurmountable.

"How then was the dilemma to be solved," Burnham asks, "and a government formed that would be neither too strong for the liberties of the people nor too weak to maintain its own existence?" "The answer of the Fathers, and of our enduring national tradition, has been: by granting government a sovereignty among a variety of officers and agencies having a relative independence of each other."

What disturbs Burnham is that this "relative independence" is not being maintained. Congress is weakening, and is not living up to its role as visualized by the Founding Fathers. The danger increasingly exists that Congress may not "survive as an autonomous, active political entity with some measure of real power, not merely as a rubber stamp, a name and a ritual, or an echo of powers lodged elsewhere."

Burnham attributes this "erosion of Congressional power" to "a massive campaign against the investigatory power of Congress." This reviewer fails to see where Congress' power, even in the investigatory field, appears to have eroded. The recent cases of Sherman Adams, Bernard Goldfine and James Hoffa do not lend support to such a thesis. Also disputable is Burnham's classifi-

cation of the investigative power as the first among Congressional powers. This is questionable in the face of Congress' control of the purse strings of the Federal Government, its legislative role, and Senatorial advice and consent with regard to presidential nominations to office.

A supporter of the Bricker Amendment, Burnham appears to favor a return to isolationism, and even appears to feel that we should withdraw from the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Organization of American States because the United States has been committed by treaty to possible war action which circumvents the traditional assignment of such action to Congress.

This book will arouse strong reactions either for or against the author's views. Nevertheless, it is a serious and well-written study.

OSCAR KRAINES

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*The Square Pegs*, by Irving Wallace. Alfred A. Knopf. 315 pp. \$5.00.

While Irving Wallace was still a schoolboy he defended the eclectic views of an eccentric millionaire, guardian of public and private morals, and propounder of the unusual, W. A. Voliva. Within the company town of Zion City, Illinois, Voliva forbade all cigarette smoking, drinking, speeding—five miles an hour was the limit—short dresses, high heels, lipstick, oysters, pharmacies, medical doctors, and movie houses. Moreover, Voliva was the leading and most articulate advocate of the belief that this earth was flat, as "flat as a saucer, a pancake, or a stove lid." To bolster this faith in pre-Columbian geography he posted a standing offer of \$5,000 if anyone could prove him wrong.

Voliva was, of course, foolish. In addition, as Wallace admits, he was vain, ignorant, and thoroughly bigoted. Yet, not only did the young Wallace defend him successfully in a school debate, but it was Voliva the Queer who first stimulated Wallace's desire to uncover the eccentrics in America's past and also his appreciation of the "human freedom to be different." *The Square Pegs* is the latest result of Wallace's preoccupation. He resurrests a fantastic muster of

several 18th and 19th century characters and the result is a number of charming, wholly amusing, and unequivocally loving biographies.

Victoria Claflin Woodhull, one of the zaniest, was an editor, prostitute, and "con-woman" supreme who became deeply involved in the Henry Ward Beecher adultery case and once opposed Ulysses S. Grant for the presidency of the United States. George Francis Train also ran against Grant—he received no votes—raced around the world in less than eighty days before the popular Jules Verne version, established the Crédit Mobilier and left long before the famous scandal, and, finally, exposed the Tweed Ring although the New York Times and Tom Nast received the credit.

Across the continent, in California, Joshua Norton, a British Jew, was wiped out in speculation. He quickly recuperated, however, by appointing himself to the exalted office of Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, living off free room and board provided by diverted townsmen. Baron James A. Harden-Hickey governed Trinidad from his Chancellerie de la Principauté de Trinidad at Manhattan's 217 West 36th Street. Timothy Dexter, another of Wallace's people, wrote a book with no punctuation and then filled pages with rows of commas, semi-colons, colons, exclamation points, periods, and question marks. There are several others, all worth reading about, chuckling over, and pondering. Why pondering? Irving Wallace answers this best when he cites John Stuart Mill's famous words on the role of non-conformism:

Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor and moral courage it contained.

MURRAY POLNER

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*Some Characteristics of American Negro Leaders*, by T. P. Monahan and E. H. Monahan. American Sociological Society. 110 pp. \$1.25.

Data for this study have largely been drawn from the 1950 Who's Who in Colored America, which contains relatively detailed information on almost 3,000 Negro "celebrities." The authors, T. P. Monahan

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and E. H. Monahan, are connected with the Philadelphia Municipal Court and the American Friends Service Committee, respectively.

The analysis clearly shows that the westward trend of the white population and its leadership have a counterpart in the northward movement of the Negro. The northern-born Negro continues to achieve distinction to a much greater degree than the southern-born Negro. Only about half of those listed as born in the South have remained there. The flow of talent, however, resembles the tide of Negro migration as a whole.

Compared to other listings, Negro women receive greater recognition among their group than do white women. The family relationships of the Negro leaders are much like those found for outstanding men in general: they marry to the same degree as the general population, but about six to seven years later; those who marry show a high proportion of childlessness and an insufficient number of children to replace themselves as families.

Occupationally in the North no one professional group predominates, although nearly half of the southern leaders are employed as educators. The clergy account for only about one-tenth of the whole. These men more often have graduated from college than persons in *Who's Who in America*, but they do not yet show as frequent an attainment of the Ph.D. degree.

There is some evidence of social adaptation. Where opportunities are available in the North, the leaders' occupational pursuits are varied. In the South they are strongly Democratic, and lean to the Republican party in the North. In the North these leaders show greater affiliation with the Episcopalian, Catholic, and Congregational churches than in the South. Such contrasts suggest that in the northward migration there has been an assimilation of northern culture.

Should Negroes consider making their career in the South? Only 47 percent of those listed in *Who's Who in Colored America* live in the South, but 68 percent of the American Negroes are found there. The comparison is not really as sharp as it appears, because opportunity often begets (in the North) recognition and leadership,

and the lack of it dissipates ability. Nevertheless, if self-improvement among the Negroes is a goal to be sought after, then here is a serious dilemma.

The Monahans have turned out a collection of extremely useful data. Individuals who want to provide active leadership in the current integration efforts would do well to read carefully this interesting analysis.

FRANK MEISSNER

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*Arshile Gorky*, by Ethel K. Schwabacher. Published for the Whitney Museum of American Art by The Macmillan Company. 159 pp., ill. \$8.50.

This attractive, lavishly illustrated volume appears a decade after the suicide of the person it deals with in pictures and prose—the eminent American artist, Arshile Gorky (1905-1948), who was born in a small village in Turkish Armenia and baptized Vosdanig Adoian. Apart from a short preface by the Whitney Museum's Lloyd Goodrich, and a slightly longer introduction by Professor Meyer Schapiro, the text was written by the painter Ethel K. Schwabacher, who first met Gorky in 1928, later studied with him, and, along with her husband, the lawyer Wolf Schwabacher, assisted the artist until his tragic, though not entirely unexpected, end.

Like Van Gogh, like Pascin, the Armenian-American artist felt that he had reached a point of suffering too intense to be endured. Early in 1946 a fire in his studio destroyed a large number of his paintings, drawings, and books. A cancer operation in that same year left him a nervous wreck. Two years later his neck was broken in an automobile accident; in the same year his wife and children left him and their Connecticut home to live with the maternal grandparents in Virginia. Lone, physically frustrated, and mentally unstable, he hanged himself in his home before his alarmed friends, Peter Blume, Malcolm Cowley, and others could come to his rescue.

Upon his arrival in America, at the age of fifteen, Vosdanig Adoian adopted the pseudonym "Gorky"—in Russian, "the bitter one"—and most of the years of his short life were bitter, indeed. As a child he and his family, like thousands of fellow-Armenians, fled from the fanatical Turks to Russian

territory; as an immigrant, the adolescent found a job at a rubber factory in Massachusetts, but when it was discovered that he used his time to sketch, he was discharged.

Readers—of whom there should be a great many—will find food for thought in this excellent biography written with warmth and understanding. Gorky's life fell into a period not conducive to the development and growth of the arts. The depression set in before he had been able to achieve even a modicum of success, and his poverty was at one time so great that he could not even purchase canvas and paint. For many years he was without a dealer. It was only in 1945, rather late, that success came to him through the one-man show Julian Levy gave to him in New York. Thereafter came the hammer blows of fate. Ironically, full recognition arrived only three years after the painter's death with the Memorial Exhibition that, from the Whitney Museum, traveled to Minneapolis and San Francisco.

Gorky was a very serious painter in the abstract vein who, having been influenced by Cézanne, Picasso, Miro, and the Surrealists, found his own style, producing dream-paintings to express his inner conflicts in unconscious symbols of a magic power. Into his best works he poured all his "feelings of love and fragility and despair,"\* creating, through a voluptuous application of pigment, rich dramatic images now often imitated by the new generation of painters born in the Depression Era. No one familiar with the non-figurative language of twentieth century art will be able to resist the nocturnal charm of his sensitive oils, and no one will read Mrs. Schwabacher's book without a sigh.

What a pity Fate did not allow him to reap the fruits of his fame and to develop further and more fully his poetic genius, for the eight color plates and seventy black and white illustrations reveal that Gorky, the artist, was still in the process of growing at the time when his name became widely known here and abroad. Understandably, Mrs. Schwabacher defends him against a charge that has frequently—and justifiably—been leveled against him, namely, that (as she herself cannot help admitting) he often

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\* Meyer Schapiro, in the "Introduction."

looked at nature through somebody else's eyes and at the work of one famous colleague through the eyes of another contemporary master:

This did not diminish his own highly original way of seeing; nothing could. In fact, this was a genuine part of that very way. He used their eyes as well as his own, impersonally, as purveyors of fact or artifact. What he saw became letters of an alphabet; using that alphabet he composed words, sentences, poems.

Well put though this is, it is, unfortunately, not entirely true. His facility, dexterity, and versatility were, perhaps, the only enemies he ever had: he looked too long at Picasso, Leger, Miro, and many others, borrowing from them so unabashedly that everyone can see the sources from which many of his concoctions are derived. For fairness' sake it must be added here that even where he was not original, he remained a very cultured and sophisticated chef, able to produce a tasty dish from numerous ingredients. Only in his last years, and especially in the highly fruitful summer of 1947, did he permit his inventive talent to come to the fore. It is, alas, idle to speculate on whether this development towards greater freedom, towards full emancipation from Modern Academicism might have continued.

ALFRED WERNER

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*American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity*, by Maxwell Geismar. Hill and Wang. 265 pp. Cloth \$3.95, paper \$1.95.

Few American literary critics keep up with contemporary novelists as well as they do with the acknowledged masters of earlier decades and generations. More is written about Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Henry James than there is about our present-day novelists.

Maxwell Geismar, who has published three major studies of American novelists of the past, does not blind himself to the significance and excellencies of the men who are creating modern American literature. In this book, Mr. Geismar analyzes not only Hemingway, Faulkner, Wolfe, Steinbeck, and Dos Passos, but also devotes as much thought and space to Norman Mailer, Nelson Algren, Saul Bellow, James Jones, and Herman Wouk. In addition, he offers us the

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first serious critical studies of the work of J. D. Salinger, William Styron, and John Howard Griffin. It is a measure of the contribution of Jewish writers to our literary scene that so many of the novelists and short story writers under discussion here are Jewish.

Mr. Geismar does not praise the work of Wouk or of Salinger, yet his probings are sharp and persuade us that his judgments are accurate. Of Salinger, he writes that the young man (he calls Salinger "The Wise Child") manages to describe Jews without labeling them as such, as though he were reluctant to place himself in the same group with his fellow-Jews. In an analysis of Salinger's recent short story in the *New Yorker*, entitled "Zooey," Mr. Geismar observes: "Isn't it odd, in Salinger's synthesis of Eastern and Western religions, that only the Jewish faith, like the Jewish faith of the family, should be barely mentioned, and in effect is omitted?" He points out that "this predominantly Jewish middle-class urban circle" ends up like an "exotic Irish and Druidic" group.

In puncturing the overblown reputation of Herman Wouk, he caustically stresses how Wouk has become a spokesman for conformity and mediocrity. *Marjorie Morningstar* is not favorably received by the critic, who considers it to be a book which has "the effect of a lobotomy upon the national spirit."

In spite of the fact that *American Moderns* is a seemingly slight book, it contains original material, shrewd judgments, and excellent guidance to current American writing. Mr. Geismar's reputation will be further enhanced by the publication of this book.

HAROLD U. RIBALOW

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*A History of American Labor*, by Joseph G. Rayback. The Macmillan Co. 459 pp. \$6.00.

*The Crisis of American Labor*, by Sidney Lens. Sagamore Press. 318 pp. \$6.00.

These two books complement each other to their mutual advantage. The first is a scholarly and mildly sympathetic survey of the historical development of American labor from Colonial times to the present; the second generally assumes the background knowledge provided by Professor Rayback's book and concentrates its discussion on the contemporary problems and predilections of organized labor. One author is academic and expository, with a point of view that is at once objective and limited; the other, being passionately involved in the status and strength of labor, approaches the activities and attitudes of contemporary unions with a personal bias that gives verve and vitality to his critical conclusions.

*A History of American Labor* explains that late in the eighteenth century the growth of manufacture had gradually created an economic cleavage between thriving employers and ill-paid employees and that this drove the latter to form craft unions and political parties. The author describes their early temporary successes but stresses their repeated failures owing to economic depressions or to adverse court decisions. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the 1930's the author's narrative reveals a sorry picture of American working conditions. Labor was repeatedly frustrated in its efforts at organization by unfriendly, if not hostile, judges and oppressed by ruthless and aggressive corporations. The story of adverse court decisions, of labor injunctions, of mass strikes broken by a brutal constabulary or by hired thugs makes grim reading.

Professor Rayback presents the development of organized labor not in isolation but as part and parcel of American life. He describes labor's political activities—both in forming its own parties and as a pressure group within a major party—as the normal behavior of a minority faction seeking benefits by democratic means. Although he discusses the radical elements within labor, he stresses the fact that American workers have repeatedly rejected Marxism and are now overwhelmingly anti-Communist.

The fluctuations of union membership—deterioration and even collapse of unions during early depressions and quick resurgence in times of prosperity—are dealt with in detail. Thus, to cite a striking instance, the depression in the 1870's brought about a drop in union membership over the nation from 300,000 to 50,000; yet a decade later, with conditions greatly improved, a successful strike on the Union Pacific caused membership in the Knights of Labor to rocket within a year from 104,000 to 703,000. With the rise of the American Federation of Labor this fluctuation became less spectacular but remained serious. It was only with the advent of the New Deal that labor was given Congressional sanction to organize freely and government encouragement to develop its present strength and status.

Professor Rayback's book would have been much livelier and more valuable if it had dwelt more on the lives and activities of the outstanding labor leaders and if it had made clearer the close relation between business unionism and our capitalist system. William Sylvis, the first significant labor leader, is barely mentioned; nor do we learn more about Terence Powderly, Peter McGuire, and others; a dynamic, radical leader like Harry Bridges is not even mentioned. Similarly, although AFL unions are treated at length, little insight is given into the causes and characteristics of what is known as business unionism.

In *The Crisis of American Labor* the major thesis is that the dominant portion of organized labor, in the grip of business-union philosophy, has reached an impasse from which it must break loose if labor is to achieve its rightful place in society. Sidney Lens, a thoughtful organizer with much practical experience in union leadership, is optimistic enough to hope that this impasse can be broken. He points out that in the beginning American workers were more radically oriented than any labor group in Europe. Their leaders were devoted idealists who were ready to abolish the capitalist economy and experiment with various socialist utopias. William Sylvis, whom he rightfully calls "one of the great unionists of this era," dreamt of producers' co-operatives as the solution: "We must adopt a system which will divide the profits of labor among

those who produce them." Uplift and cooperation were also the ideals of the Knights of Labor. Eugene Debs, a major labor leader in the 1890's, already held bright the vision that was to lead him into socialism. In discussing the dedication of union officials to the labor ideal he remarked, "The labor agitator of the early days held no office, had no title, drew no salary, saw no footlights, heard no applause, never saw his name in print, and fills an unknown grave."

The emergence of business unionism with the rise of the American Federation of Labor gave organized labor a sharp thrust to the right. Thereafter it shunned politics and social ideals and concentrated on higher wages and the shorter work-day. This narrow and selfish attitude caused AFL leaders to ignore the millions of unorganized workers, to embrace the prevailing philosophy of rugged individualism, and to emulate the precepts and practices of business leaders with whom they bargained for better working conditions. Before long these labor leaders—even those who had begun as socialists—ran their unions in the way employers operated their factories: They became autocratic; they raised their own salaries; they provided themselves with luxurious perquisites. Most of them strove earnestly to improve the lot of their members, but they could do little in the face of selfish employers and inimical judges.

As Lens points out, "The tragedy of business unionism is not that it fails to do a good economic job for its individual members, but [rather] its tepid philosophy, its lack of solidarity, its loss of evangelism, and its excesses."

The rise of the CIO in the late 1930's injected fresh idealism into the thinking of American workers. Socialist and Communist organizers worked heroically to unionize the large-scale industries and to inject social goals into the aims of organized labor. But the anti-Communist campaign, intensified by the outbreak of the cold war after 1946, turned most of these leaders into advocates of free enterprise and champions of the welfare state. They purged the CIO of its left-wing unions and accepted some of the practices of business unionism—and are now merged with the AFL. The result is a "poverty of thinking" that keeps organized labor

in an intellectual strait-jacket of its own making.

Lens argues eloquently that organized labor must find a new direction if it is to break out of its present impasse. With automation constantly reducing employment and with world-wide political tension putting a damper on social striving, leaders of labor must re-vitalize the union movement or yield further to conservative pressure. To improve moral standards, however badly needed, is not enough. Nor will more democracy within unions suffice. Lens advocates the combination of these two reforms with strong political actions as the most likely solution. He urges a return to the ideals and practices of the 1930's—"complete the unfinished revolution begun in the 1930's"—which in his thinking means greater attention to the unemployed, Negro workers, southern workers, white-collar workers, and the political goal of social unionism. He admits that his precept is "visionary" but insists that it has its "roots in reality." These roots are tenuous, however, in view of the fact that American workers, wedded to a middle-class philosophy, will need more than preaching from the top to drop their adherence to free enterprise and assume their rightful economic position in society.

CHARLES A. MADISON

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*Victoria at Night and Other Stories*, by Uli Beigel. Random House. 185 pp. \$3.00.

This collection of thirteen stories, containing portraits of innocence and of innocence confronting experience, was written by a young woman in her early twenties. Some of them—such as "The Mourners," "Letterboxes Ought to be Yellow," and "Sparrows"—reflect her European heritage (she spent the early years of her life in Austria, Germany, France, and England). She is, however, modern, Americanized, and liberated—as "The Game" and "Victoria at Night" amply testify—having gone to several schools in New York and then to Bennington, and having worked for a movie company, the "Y," and a market research firm. She is now settled in New York City, has recently married, and is currently working on ideas for two novels. Her publisher says she is unusual in having a first book of short stories published (several of them appeared

originally in *The New Yorker*, *Mademoiselle*, and *New World Writing*) before having published a novel, but tells us he was greatly impressed by her talent and maturity. He continues by saying, correctly, that the two universal motifs which run through this collection are the problem of love and lovelessness—as in “The Green and Yellow Grasses”—and that of the relationship between the generations—as in “The First Alarm.” Another and more fundamentally artistic way of approaching Miss Beigel’s work would be to trace the relationship in these stories between sophistication and fantasy. There is a group of stories—“The Game,” “The Snapshots,” and the title story, for example—which portrays a “placid, free, wise young woman, not given to boredom or panic” but trying desperately to sustain a mask of courage and independence over the hysteria, fear, and inadequacy she feels underneath. In some of these she is the wilful child, and in others the post-Millay mistress of many lovers. There is another group—“The Merger,” “The Mirror Days,” and “The Balancing Man,” for example—which portrays sur-realistically the nightmare of young people confronting the terror of love, or of nothingness, or of conformity. Somewhere in between come such stories as “The Mourners,” “The Poor in Spirit,” and “World Without a Sun,” which deal with the recognizable surfaces of life but which verge upon hallucination before they are through.

Sophistication of manner, however, distinguishes them all, for Miss Beigel has learned early, apparently, how to be up-to-date and clever in construction and point of view. She allows just enough of the story’s meaning to seep through so that the reader will have something to go on, but she never becomes overt enough to make it easy. She is indirect, elliptical, elusive and allusive: her openings are brisk and abrupt, and her endings are a curious blend of climax and enigma. At its best, this method is powerful and vivid; at its worst, it is expressionless. One should not, in fiction at least, play one’s cards close to the chest unless one has a “full house,” and Miss Beigel sometimes, in appearing to conceal something significant, turns out to have been bluffing. Thus the reader is now and again left wondering—as in “The Game”

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—just what it is that is bothering her people, or whether it is worth the trouble to find out. There is such a thing as letting artistic economy squeeze the story dry of emotional force.

This story, though, illustrates the central image and postulates the key problem of the collection as a whole: one’s relationship to oneself and to others is an elaborate game the rules of which are imperfectly understood, but one must pretend with desperate calculation to understand them if he is to remain in the running. The protagonists of these stories wonder intermittently whether the game is worth playing, but almost always they find themselves with no other alternative. The story which explores this problem most clearly and profoundly, and, significantly, at the greatest length, “World Without a Sun,” is also my favorite. Here, the liberated young woman, in the course of travelling to and attending the wedding party, in wintry New England, of a girlhood Gentile friend, meditates in a moving and convincing fashion, upon the relation between her forgotten Jewishness, her childhood, her adult bohemian life, and the conventional world of the Protestant middle class. Again, the climax seems to resolve only into another puzzle, but I sensed a weight of discovery which, although hard to define, felt real nevertheless.

Nowadays, the hard-won lessons of Flaubert, Henry James, and Joyce are imbibed by our younger writers with their mothers’ milk. And who is to complain at this? It is only when the manner is caught without the substance that the modern masters are a less-than-useful influence. The dramatic technique is successful only when it increases the moving powers of a work, and not when it simply creates an impervious gloss. These stories are the work of an alert, intelligent, and imaginative sensibility. Although I am less overwhelmed by Miss Beigel’s precociousness than her publisher—for some of her work is merely bright—I think she shows much promise in her variety and subtlety. When she learns to be hard and laconic without being at the same time brittle and metallic, perhaps in the less confining quarters of the novel, then she will be on the road to maturity.

NORMAN FRIEDMAN

BOOKS

*A Rabbi With the American Red Cross*, by Ferdinand M. Isserman. Whittier Books, Inc. 334 pp. \$3.95.

As its title indicates, the book tells the story of a Rabbi who offered his services to the American Red Cross and was assigned by the United States Army to visit North Africa for that purpose. The book is a record of the Rabbi's visits to Algeria, Tunisia, and the Middle East, including Palestine and Egypt; but it is more than a mere diary. It gives the reader a play-by-play description from the moment the boat sailed from a United States port to the time the author returned. It is written with social passion and gives an amazing revelation of contacts with all types of fighting men in the United States Army.

To most laymen, the knowledge of Red Cross activities is superficial. Few know the universal scope of its ramified concerns nor of the large variety of causes which it serves. The author tells us of the inter-denominational and inter-racial fellowship on and behind the battlefields under the American flag. Whereas the book deals mainly with the Red Cross and gives the reader a profound insight into its work, it does not omit to point out its weaknesses. However, one goes away with the impression that the over-all job of the Red Cross is magnificent. The author dispels many rumors about the Red Cross and gives us a clear picture of its usefulness.

The book is written in narrative form, is very descriptive, and brings the reader into the heart of things. One gets a much better understanding of what our boys and girls had to go through, but one cannot help feeling that much is yet to be done by the Army and by the Red Cross to alleviate the suffering of the wounded and ease the burden of those that carry on the war. One gets the impression that there is still lacking that absolute co-operation between the Army and the Red Cross, which could make it easier for the Red Cross to serve and the Army to be served.

In addition to the Red Cross work with which the author occupied himself, the book tells us much about the battlefields, the invasion and the emotional attitude of the average soldier going to the battlefield and

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returning from it. An interesting chapter is the one dealing with the psychiatric work done on the battlefield and nearby. Likewise interesting is the chapter dealing with Palestine.

Upon reading the book, one feels as if he is traveling with the troops and is passing through all the vicissitudes of battle. It was not an easy task for the author, to go through these experiences and venture forth on an unpredictable mission on which he was met, in some cases, with enthusiasm and, in others, with indifference or even antagonism. The information he brought forth from this mission is of great value to the Army and to the Red Cross. It is also of considerable value to those of us who are not familiar with the services of the Red Cross and its all-around policies. The author's contribution to the Red Cross in bringing about the "town hall" idea is of immense importance and proves how necessary it is to invite non-professionals to co-operate and how valuable their contribution can be at times. It is a book worth reading, and it will open up a new area for those who live in confined spheres of interest.

A. E. ABRAMOWITZ

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*Democracy versus Communism*, by Kenneth Colegrave. Published and distributed for The Institute of Fiscal and Political Economy by the D. Van Nostrand Company. 424 pp. \$4.95.

Until recently many boards of education have viewed the teaching of Communist history, theory, and practice as dangerously subversive. Teachers, sensitive to attack on ideological grounds, have been understandably reluctant to risk their livelihoods and reputations by attempting to instruct their students in so explosive a subject. This position of extreme caution was understandable. After all, no really appropriate high-school text was available that would systematically present the differences and similarities between Communism and Democracy. And teachers, overworked and underpaid as they are, could not possibly be expected to develop curricula of their own. Yet, some of the more courageous and foresighted public officials were pointing out how necessary it

was "to know the enemy." For instance, in 1948—at a time when our World War II "honeymoon" with the Russians definitely came to an end—General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his inaugural address as President of Columbia University, said that "the truth about Communism is today an indispensable requirement for the proper appreciation of the true value of our democratic system. . . . Ignorance of Communism, Fascism, or any police-state philosophy is far more dangerous than ignorance of the most virulent disease."

In 1953 a step in the right direction was taken. The Institute of Fiscal and Political Education—a non-profit organization chartered by the Board of Regents of the New York State Education Department—got money for a large educational project on Communism and Democracy. The conservatism and patriotism of the backers were beyond challenge. The Institute commissioned Dr. Kenneth Colegrove, a Harvard Ph.D. and a member of the Northwestern University Political Science Department for thirty-four years, to write a textbook on the subject.

Three years later the fruits of these efforts were publicized. Aimed at the high-school level, *Democracy versus Communism* is quite definitely an anti-Communist textbook. In contrasting the two antagonistic ways of life, the author makes no effort to present the Communists' justifications or rationalizations. Rather, his commitments to Democracy clearly shine through. The book is not devoid of "emotional appeal." But it would be difficult, indeed, to prepare such a text for high-school pupils without dramatizing the subject-matter.

The reviewer—himself an escapee from Communist Czechoslovakia—finds the juxtaposition of the material and the moral, spiritual, and philosophical aspects of these two systems most intriguing—not the least because of what he has learned from it about the roots of Democracy in America. For instance, the chapter entitled "What Is Democracy?" goes all the way back to the Greek City States and shows how the ideas and practices of Democracy have changed through the ages. One can clearly see where

the Magna Carta, the Habeas Corpus Act, and the Bill of Rights fit in. The development of the ideas of Communism is equally broadly conceived in Chapter 3. Plato's Republic is the point of departure. Early Christian communities come in for an explanation, as do the experiments of the pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and the settlers in Jamestown. It all seems to lead logically to the Communist Manifesto. We are then well armed for understanding the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and its consequences so far.

The facts are comprehensive in coverage. Armed with such an excellent background, an intelligent high-school student should have little difficulty in finding a spot for Premier Bulganin's recent literary endeavors "on behalf of peace." He might be slightly at a loss when trying to explain our reaction to these letters; but the frustration so suffered would be a good lesson. The doctrine of Democracy is by no means as clear-cut as that of Communism. There is wide scope for disagreement and compromise. Once the student—or anyone else in our society—realizes this, he is well on his way to becoming a true citizen of Democracy.

The information presented in this volume has been gathered in accordance with strictly scientific procedures. The interpretation is fortunately not objective. After all, the purpose is to present a solid case for Democracy. The high-school student should get factual and emotional ammunition for being effectively able to convince himself and others that variation on the theme of Democracy is far superior to any other socio-political system that Homo Sapiens has yet been able to develop. This book serves that purpose very well. As to the future, Dr. Colegrove does not leave anybody in doubt as to the way in which he thinks the fate of mankind ought to proceed. Yet, he is perfectly willing to leave the decision up to the judgment of time, which "alone will tell how long this brutal [Communist] code can flourish, and whether in the end it will triumph over the more humane code of the Western World."

FRANK MEISSNER

**On Yiddish In Israel**

A Letter to the Editor

Mr. Heiman's article in the summer issue of *The Chicago Jewish Forum* naturally interested me very much, and his taking up the cudgels on behalf of the linguistic scapegoat, Yiddish, touched off a sympathetic chord in the present writer, especially after the Kraslow piece in the American press, which, as I have pointed out in the *Boston Globe*, misrepresented the actual situation in regard to the prospect of Yiddish in Israel.

It now devolves upon me to correct Mr. Heiman on a couple of important points. Omitting the matter of the misspelling of names, let me mention here that Sholom Aleichem never wrote a play or story called "Yente Telepente." He would have been scandalized, could he have read the statement. It was J. Adler, under the pseudonym of Kovner, who wrote a series for the New York *Forverts* describing the antics of the

Jewish common shrew, Yente Telepente (not Telepende). The name was often used by anti-*Forverts* partisans as a by-word of vulgarity in the press. I can understand the opposition to such a performance on the part of the students twenty-five years ago or more; and despite the box-office success, it was poor judgment to put on that type of show—Yiddish or Hebrew.

Worse still is the mis-statement that "There are no Yiddish books published in Israel except some pornographic dime novels" (p. 233, last paragraph). I receive handsomely printed books published in Israel in Yiddish almost every week. Indeed, Israel is becoming an important publishing center for Yiddish books by both American (Leivick, Baizer, Kliger) and Israeli (Suckewer, Mendel Man, Mordkhe Yaffe, and a score of others) authors. His pessimistic conclusion must therefore, in the light of his unfamiliarity with what is now going on, be taken with a grain of salt.

Cambridge, Mass.

**A. A. ROBACK**

**THE CHICAGO JEWISH FORUM** is a quarterly magazine devoted to serious issues. It is non-partisan and is not subsidized by any organization or institution. Though primarily concerned with Jewish culture, it is also interested in preserving the cultural heritage of other minority groups and in the intelligent discussion of those economic, political, and social problems upon whose solution depends a healthy American democracy.

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Rehabilitation projects in Israel, assistance to national organizations such as Hadassah, Hias, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and such other institutions, should be of great concern to the American Jew.

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Let us help our youth realize its potentials as stalwart defenders of decency, righteousness, and peace on earth.

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These days of turmoil and changing world conditions must exact of us added vigilance in defense of our spiritual values and traditions.

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The business of saving lives, building Israel, and strengthening democracy is not finished. These same tasks await us in the year ahead.

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. . . More than the marvels of Greece or the more hoary antiquities of Egypt, more than the accuracies of modern science or the inventions of modern industry, are these messages out of the Hebrew centuries to every man and woman who wishes to think truly and to live nobly. . . . SAMUEL G. SMITH

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his brother and sister are also doing  
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*from*

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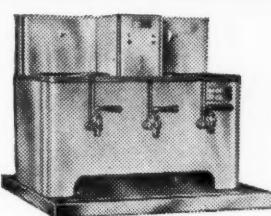
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GREETINGS**

*from*

**MR. AND MRS.**

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*Chicago*

**ROSH HASHANA GREETINGS**

*from*

**Mr. and Mrs. MAURICE J. ZUBER**

*and*

**Mr. and Mrs. ROBERT GOLTER**

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**NEW YEAR GREETINGS**

*from*

**Mr. and Mrs.  
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AND SONS**

**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**SEASON'S GREETINGS**

*from*

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*from*

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*A Happy New Year*

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**City Treasurer, City of Chicago**

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**ROSH HASHANA GREETINGS**

*from*

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*New Year Greetings from*

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**ROSH HASHANA GREETINGS**

*from*

**RELIABLE DRUGS COMPANY**

110 West Hubbard Street

Chicago 11, Illinois

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*Season's Greetings from*

**GEORGE J. TADROWSKI**

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*New Year Greetings from*

**MICHAEL F. ZLATNIK**

Chicago, Illinois

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*Rosh Hashana Greetings to my friends, relatives and to Kol Yisroel*

**AARON De WOSKIN**

Chicago, Illinois

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